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The Godhead of Jesus





HULSEAN LECTURES,

*&c.*

Ὁ ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ Ὁ ΘΕΟΣ ΜΟΥ.

*THE GODHEAD OF JESUS:*

FOUR SERMONS

✓  
(*BEING THE HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1866*)

Preached before the University of Cambridge:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

TWO SERMONS PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY ON  
GOOD-FRIDAY AND EASTER-DAY, 1866.

BY THE REVEREND

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CAMBRIDGE:

DEIGHTON, BELL, AND CO.

LONDON: BELL AND DALDY.

1867

Cambridge:

PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A.  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.



## P R E F A C E.

THAT so great a title should preface so small a book may seem to require justification. Of the disproportion between them no one can be more sensible than the Author himself. The object contemplated in the following Lectures is not a full discussion of the subject proposed, but a contribution to the study of it. The two Sermons which are subjoined bear upon the same subject, though the reference is special, and the treatment somewhat different.

Upon the central truth of Christianity many lines of proof converge. If in the following pages one of these lines is made clearer, the pious design of Mr Hulse, the Founder of these Lectures, will not have altogether failed of its accomplishment. For this result we would humbly ask, in the spirit of his own prayer, "May the Divine blessing for ever go along with all my benefactions, and may the greatest and the best of Beings, by His all-wise providence and gracious influence, make the same effectual to His own glory and the good of my fellow-creatures!"



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## LECTURE I.

### *THE GODHEAD OF JESUS.*

#### MATTHEW XVI. 13.

*When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?*

THE question which I propose to consider in these Lectures may be briefly stated as follows: Is there reason to believe that the Jesus of the Gospels is very and eternal God?

To those who are in any degree acquainted with the religious thought and the religious literature of the day, the choice of this subject will appear not only obvious, but (I had almost said) necessary. For, whatever form religious discussion may take, the question I have proposed really lies at the root of all our controversies. And while many shrink from giving a decisive answer to it, and try to keep it out of sight, others more bold, or (as they term it) more advanced, have elaborated an answer in the negative. I do not know whether avowed and formal Arianism has many adherents in England. Some such doubtless there are. But between the deliberate denial of the Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth

and a hearty intelligent belief in it, there are many stages and degrees of doubt. There is a neutral ground of uncertainty and hesitation, shading off imperceptibly into unbelief, which is only too thickly peopled. And this neutral ground is not a level, but a slope. There is no logical standing: alas! how often is there no practical resting-place between the two extremes<sup>1</sup>.

The doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus, whether true or false, is the keystone of the arch of Christianity. So long as it remains unshaken, the whole fabric of the Christian system is secure. Loosen or dislodge it, and not only will the theology of the New Testament become disintegrated, but its morality as a power will vanish, however it may survive as a code.

The opponents of this doctrine have not failed to perceive its pre-eminent importance. They have been cautious for the most part in their approaches to this citadel of Christianity. One outpost after another has been assailed by battery, or artfully undermined; and the beleaguering hosts have pushed forward their lines, and closed in upon the fortress, which is the object of final attack. The inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture, and its historic value; the truth of the Mosaic cosmogony; the eternity of punishment; the possibility of miracles; and, lastly, the reality of the Atonement—each in

<sup>1</sup> See page 16 for further remarks on this point.

turn has been made the subject of free discussion by men who have mistaken hostility for candour, or at least have assumed the position of critics rather than of disciples. But it was not difficult to foresee that all these discussions, so far as their results were adverse to established Christian belief, would serve to clear the way for the discussion in which we are now engaged, and to render it inevitable. When the king's charter is pronounced a forgery, his royal prerogative abolished, the justice of his decisions questioned, his pardon and his bounty alike neglected and despised, then little remains save the empty title of sovereign; and we are not surprised that the annihilation of his power should be followed by violence to his person.

In dealing with the question I have proposed, I feel that we ought clearly to recognise the limitations under which alone it can be considered. Of these, some are common to all such investigations, others peculiar to our own. To these preliminary topics I have to invite your attention to-day.

1. Many modern writers refuse assent to a doctrine, however clearly stated in the Epistles, unless they find it as clearly laid down in our Lord's own discourses recorded in the Gospels. St Paul is too logical. St John too subjective. St Peter too impetuous. Only St James is left. But, for consistency's sake, they cannot retain him while rejecting the other three. So they appeal to the Evangelists.

But one of these, St John, is found to be so explicit in his statements of doctrine, that his evidence must be got rid of. He is again found to be too subjective to be trustworthy. His Gospel, it is alleged, was written long after the events which it records, and the narrative of those events, and especially of our Lord's words, is coloured and distorted by the medium through which the Apostle looked back upon them. Hence we are required to draw all our materials for a life of the Founder of our religion from the first three, or *Synoptic* Gospels, as they are called<sup>1</sup>. In submitting to this demand, I would not be understood for one moment to allow its justice. I have a conviction of the truth, the inspiration, and the equal authority of the whole New Testament and every part of it. Additional study of the Book deepens this conviction. Increased acquaintance with the allegations and arguments of objectors serves also to deepen it. I cannot profess (as some profess) when treating of the topic which I have proposed, that my mind is a *tabula rasa*, free from all bias or prejudice. If to abandon my most cherished hopes, to uproot my strongest

<sup>1</sup> Even as regards the first three Gospels, the anonymous author of *Ecce Homo* tells us (p. 10), "Nothing is more natural than that exaggerations and even inventions should be mixed in our biographies with genuine facts." Of the "story of Christ's temptation," he says (p. 17), "It rests indeed on no very strong external

evidence, and there may be exaggeration in its details; but," &c. For a fuller discussion of this strange statement see Lecture III. It is quoted now to shew how meagre and how uncertain is the residuum of historic fact left us by this free handling of the sieve.



belief, to mistrust those spiritual intuitions which to a Christian man are more certain than logical conclusions—if this is to be free from prejudice, I cannot pretend to be unprejudiced. Nor again do I think that a Christian preacher ought to put himself on the level of the doubter or the sceptic, in the hope of winning such to the faith. If he has doubts himself, he is so far disqualified for discharging the office which he holds, while such doubts remain<sup>1</sup>. It is the duty of the Christian minister to resolve the doubts of others, not to engender them by parading his own. True philosophy aims at certainty. It regards a state of doubt as a morbid not a healthy condition of mind. It seeks not to stifle doubt with the ‘ipse dixit’ of authority, but to throw the light of truth on what is obscure, and to confirm what is wavering. I would, in passing, urge on the younger members of our academic body the importance of attaining to certainty on all the leading truths of Christianity, before they take in hand to instruct others either as writers or preachers. It is now too much the fashion to entertain or to affect doubts even on subjects in which from their very nature no new discoveries can be made<sup>2</sup>. Do not confound

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> “Amid the manifold improvements and developments of our time, who will say that any fresh light has been thrown on the antecedent probabilities of revelation, or the methods which the Almighty might, or might

not, pursue in imparting it? On this, however men may delude themselves, like most of the schoolmen, with mere terms, no step is gained by mere reasoning without data: *and our age has discovered, it can discover, nothing.* Our best course will be found at last

partial knowledge or ignorance with uncertainty. In reference to all the profounder truths of revelation you must be content to say with St Paul, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part;" but you may also say with him, "I know in whom I have believed," and with St Peter, "Lord Jesus, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Without, therefore, conceding the authority of any part of the New Testament, or admitting that doubt in matters of religion may be safely acquiesced in, I shall endeavour to shew from the Gospel narrative that the Jesus, of whom the Evangelists wrote, is very and eternal God.

Though, as has been observed already, attempts have been made to set aside the historic truth of St John's Gospel, yet I think that to yield to such attempts would be to yield to the claims of a credulity from which an honest and intelligent man might well shrink. I will however make the concession which the author of *Ecce Homo*<sup>1</sup> has made,

to revert to the sound maxim, that in the things of God *Fides precedit intellectum*: the maxim which—however derided by these writers under the name of "the religious view, *quand même*," or as an appeal to faith which at once does away with the character of philosophy in the man that makes it—does in fact stand connected with the highest intellectual development of modern Europe." Mill, *Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*, p. 84, ed. 2.

<sup>1</sup> This author has well said (Pref. to 5th ed. p. vii.), "The detection of discrepancies in the documents establishes a certain degree of independence in them, and thus gives weight to their agreement; in particular the wide divergence in tone and subject-matter of the Fourth Gospel from the other three affords a strong presumption in favour of all statements in which it coincides with them."

and in the discussion of the question before us will not appeal to the Fourth Gospel, "except in confirmation of statements made in the other Gospels," or in cases "where its testimony seems in itself probable and free from the suspected peculiarities<sup>1</sup>." But while making this concession I am well aware that it is one which many persons of moderate views would repudiate. The author of *Phases of Faith* tells us that the late Dr Arnold rested the main strength of Christianity on the Gospel of John. "Arnold," he says, "regarded John's Gospel as abounding with smaller touches which marked the eye-witness, and altogether to be the vivid and simple picture of a divine reality undeformed by credulous legend<sup>2</sup>." Such was the opinion of one who was well versed in this kind of criticism; whose eye had detected, and whose firm and fearless hand had weeded out 'credulous legend' from the field of Roman History

<sup>1</sup> Preface to 5th edition, p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> 6th ed. p. 81. Contrast with this statement the reiterated contempt thrown on St John's Gospel by M. Renan in his Introduction: "Far removed from the simple, disinterested, impersonal tone of the synoptics, the Gospel of John shews incessantly the pre-occupation of the apologist, the mental reservation of the sectarian, the desire to prove a thesis, and to convince adversaries." P. 17, Eng. ed. "I dare defy anyone to compose a Life of Jesus with any meaning, from the discourses which John at-

tributes to him. This manner of incessantly preaching and demonstrating himself, this perpetual argumentation, this stage-effect devoid of simplicity, these long arguments after each miracle; these stiff and awkward discourses, the tone of which is so often false and unequal, would not be tolerated by a man of taste compared with the delightful sentences of the synoptics." Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> All the arguments *against* the authenticity of St John's Gospel are to be found in Bretschneider's work, *Probabilia de Evangelii et Epistolarum*

2. But if the Jesus whose claims we are to consider is to be the Jesus of the Evangelists, as distinguished from the Jesus whom Paul preached and John loved, at least let us understand clearly the limits of the documents which are the sources of our information respecting Him. If our ground is narrowed, at least it should be accurately defined. One result of the critical activity brought to bear of late years on the text of Scripture, has been to produce in the minds of many who have no opportunity for such studies, an impression not only that the English version is unsatisfactory, but that great uncertainty attaches to the original text. They hear of a mass of various readings, of certain passages being pronounced spurious, the record of one or two incidents more than suspected, and they conceive of the New Testament as of some old picture, so tampered with by being cleaned and repaired and retouched, that the traces of the painter's hand, and the lines and colour of the original picture are lost beyond recovery. And yet this is to do injustice both to Scripture and to textual criticism. The work of the critic when honestly done, has been to restore, not to efface, to render secure, not to undermine, the sacred text. I would compare that text to some grand cathe-

*Journis, Apostoli, Inule et Origine.* Though published as long ago as 1820, it still furnishes weapons for assailants of the fourth Gospel. On the other hand, "Lücke, who in his history of early Christianity has

wholly surrendered the genuineness of the first three Gospels, refers to the Fourth as 'the Sanctuary and the Truth.'" Tholuck, *Introduction to Commentary on St John*, § 6.

dral erected by the pious munificence of a former age. The fabric in its *substantial* parts has been maintained by those who in succeeding times have had the charge and the use of it. But the skill which reared and adorned the edifice is not transmitted; and as here a moulding decays and is dislodged, and there a pinnacle falls to the ground, or the fair tracery of a window crumbles or is mutilated, there is no cunning hand to replace the stone as it was before. The gap is not filled up, or is filled up with an unsightly mass of common brick. But at length the study of ecclesiastical art is revived, and men think on the stones of that noble Church, and it pitieth them to see it so disfigured and defaced. And a skilful architect sets himself to pick out the fragments from that heap of long neglected rubbish, to compare the claims of each portion to a place in such a wall or on such a buttress. And as his labour of honest love proceeds, guided and encouraged by others skilful and devoted as himself, we see our grand Cathedral gradually *restored*, i.e. brought back in all its details of grace and beauty to its first condition; and we look not upon an edifice of our own creation, but on that glorious work which on the morning of its completion gladdened the eye and the heart of the architect who long centuries ago designed and built it. The labours of critics have in like manner tended to restore the text of the New Testament to the state in which it left the hands of the inspired writers. And while, as

regards matters of detail, such as the forms or order of words (for it is with such minutiae that textual criticism chiefly concerns itself), each year of research brings us nearer to an accurate text, those who are employed in such research know better than other students, that beneath the surface and ornament of the building on which they are engaged, there is a great fabric of substantial truth which the lapse of centuries has not availed to weaken or impair. They know that while in other writings of the same age as the New Testament, there are passages so corrupt, that editors are compelled to abandon the Manuscripts and have recourse to conjecture, there is no such instance to be found in the Gospels or the Epistles. This is a fact, which however accounted for, has always struck me as having an important bearing on the results of textual criticism and on the genuineness of the New Testament.

3. If then our copies of the Gospels may be regarded as approaching so near to the autograph, that the difference is ever becoming smaller and smaller, and may be practically neglected, the enquiry at once suggests itself, 'Are the accounts given of Jesus by the Evangelists true and trustworthy biographies?' To answer this question fully and completely would be to repeat the arguments which from early days of the Church to the present time have been adduced by Christian apologists in refutation of attacks made on the Gospel narrative. These attacks have varied

in outline with the ever-shifting modes of human thought and the outward circumstances of the Church. But one principle underlies all the various objections which have been urged, whether by Celsus, by Paine, by Hume, by Strauss, by Newman, or by Renan—and that principle is an invincible repugnance to admit the possibility of a miracle. The difficulty of eliminating the miraculous element has been felt to be so great, that some modern biographers of Jesus have found it necessary to draw largely on their imagination to supply the rents thus made in the simple narrative from which they profess to derive their information. The old, the hackneyed sophism is still propagated as confidently as ever: ‘It is not contrary to experience that human testimony should be false, but it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true.’ Renan says, “In the name of universal experience we banish miracle from history. We do not say, ‘a miracle is impossible;’ we say, ‘up to this time a miracle has never been proved<sup>1</sup>.’” This sophism (for it is nothing better) has been anticipated and refuted by Paley in his work on the *Evidences of Christianity*—a work, which, amidst many changes in our course of education, has been wisely retained by the University as a subject which every student is required to read. To this, among other causes, we may doubtless attribute the sobriety which has generally characterised the religious investigations of Cambridge men. To say

<sup>1</sup> Introd. p. 29.

this, is not to ascribe to Paley's treatise freedom from defects. We only desire that it may retain its place in our course of study till a better book is written<sup>1</sup>.

But it may be questioned whether, after all, the miracles of the New Testament constitute the chief obstacle to the acceptance of the narrative as historical. It is not merely the *supernatural*, of which the miracles are the exhibition, at which offence is really taken. The real 'stone of stumbling' is the *super-human* which is displayed in the life and character and acts of Jesus, and which He is represented to have claimed as attaching to Him. Men will not have this man to reign over them. Feeling that the Jesus of the Gospels occupies a moral and spiritual stage far above themselves, they have either sought with Arius and Socinus and Professor Newman to bring Him down to their own level, or with Strauss and the followers of Hegel on the continent and some of their more cautious imitators in England, they have elevated humanity into a Christ, raising man's nature to that to which no individual could be supposed to attain. In one word, if we will honestly probe the various infidel and semi-infidel theories which have been propounded since the beginning of the Christian era, we shall find the real disease to be the pride of man's heart refusing to own a superior—the sin by which he at first lost Paradise and which evermore hinders his return. This pride of humanity has been

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note (A).



variously developed. It has shielded its attacks upon Christianity, now by a denial of miracles—a refusal to allow the operation of any law which man cannot trace; at another time, by seeking for moral defects and imperfections in the character of Jesus; at another, by regarding the human race as the truest efflux and manifestation of the Divinity, the only real corporeal Christ, animated by and at one with an all pervading Deity. But the tendency is one and the same. And if we are satisfied that such is the case, we can account for the rejection of a narrative, which, if only as deserving of credit as ordinary biographies, requires our belief not only in the miraculous and the supernatural, but in the superhuman too—a belief in One who being in the form of man was yet more than man, and who though truly man claimed to be the eternal uncreated God. We thus convict objectors of prejudice which is fatal to the impartial estimate of the value of testimony. But on the other hand it has never been shewn that the four Evangelists were not “competent judges of the facts to which they give concurrent testimony,” or that they were all “alike actually under some indirect influence in giving it.” And, to adopt the words of Bp. Butler, “Till this is made out, the *natural* laws of human action require that testimony be admitted<sup>1</sup>.”

4. In conducting our present enquiry, it may be necessary, especially in this place, to remind ourselves

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Analogy*, p. ii. c. 7.

of the nature of the *proof* which alone is applicable to questions of this kind. We cannot demonstrate the Godhead of Jesus, as we establish a proposition in pure mathematics; and if we could, the result for moral and spiritual ends would in itself be altogether useless. In abstract science a proposition not only *is* either true or false, but it is apprehended as such by all men alike, whose previous training enables them to understand the reasoning by which it is established. In physics, in moral philosophy, and in natural theology, where the steps of the argument are not always strict logical deductions, but often only analogies, not necessary conclusions but probabilities, these steps will afford secure or insecure foothold to each traveller, according as the analogies are more or less clear to his apprehension, the probabilities more or less satisfactory to his judgment. We had a remarkable illustration of this truth in the discussion raised a few years ago by the treatise entitled the *Plurality of Worlds*, and the replies which it provoked. It was an instructive spectacle—that *γυγαυτομαχία* in the lofty regions of cosmical speculation—so interesting, so inconclusive. One combatant affirming what the other tried to disprove, and men equally happy whichever prevailed—not less so, if neither theory could be established. But in questions of revealed religion the case is very different. All the doctrines of Christianity are based upon *facts*, and our belief in those facts rests upon testimony. If

the concurrent testimony of four honest men is worthy of credit, we have only to ascertain what their evidence is, and accept it forthwith.

And yet we know that this is not an account of the whole matter. We know that to accept the testimony of the Evangelists, where they agree, will lead us on to conclusions of infinitely greater concern to us, individually, than all the achievements of human genius and labour put together. When we set ourselves to weigh the evidence for the Godhead of Jesus, we need not to be told that our task differs as widely from an ordinary historical investigation, as the position of the presiding judge in a great will-case differs from that of the claimant to the estate. We feel that there are results of our enquiry (more or less remote) which are interwoven with our duties, our happiness, our hopes; and however we may boast of our impartiality, we cannot deliver a verdict on the grounds of objective testimony only. To this must be added the facts of hereditary belief, and early prepossessions, of which the influence upon our minds is as subtle and as penetrating as that of the atmosphere upon our bodily organization. Conscious that these prepossessions are in favour of the claims of Christ, conscious of a bias in that direction, men not unnaturally lean *à priori* to the other side. Some do this from a conviction of the importance of the issue—some from sheer honesty of purpose—some, and especially our younger countrymen, from the

promptings of a chivalrous impulse (not to be condemned if rightly directed) which stirs them to espouse in debate the weaker or less popular side. The result of these mingled, these conflicting influences on religious investigations is apparent in the indecision, the acquiescent uncertainty, which characterises so much of our modern thought, so marks the temper of nominal Christians in these latter days. I have already said that there is no logical resting-place between belief in Jesus as God and the distinct renunciation of His claims. This cannot remain an open question with any reasonable or conscientious man. For if to worship God is a duty and to worship the creature is a sin, it is important to decide whether He whom the best and most highly civilized men have worshiped for eighteen centuries, is or is not God; in other words, whether the worship of Christendom during all that time has been idolatrous or not. And while to refuse to worship God is an act of wicked rebellion against Him, to refuse to worship the creature at any cost is a plain religious duty. Upon such questions as these I cannot believe from what I see of the constitution of nature, and know of the history of our race, that God intended any of us to be in doubt. And if we *can* attain to certainty, indecision is criminal, is perilous<sup>1</sup>. Where there is

<sup>1</sup> "If," says Ep. Butler (*Analogy*, p. ii. c. 1), "Christ be indeed the Mediator between God and man, i. e. if Christianity be true—if He be our

Lord, our Saviour, and our God: no one can say what may follow, not only the obstinate but the careless disregard to Him in those high relations."

a real—and therefore an humble—desire in any heart to know the truth, I cannot doubt that the beneficent Author of our being, who is the source of all wisdom will lead that heart to recognise and to embrace the truth. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally. Only let him ask in faith, nothing doubting” the goodness or power of the Most High. It was with the hope of helping such persons to a right conclusion that this Lectureship was established, no less than to confute the assailants of our Holy Religion. My object will be, in the three succeeding Lectures, to state concisely some of the grounds on which we may rest a defence of this doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ. The limits prescribed to me do not admit of a full discussion of the subject; and I think it may be more profitable to set before you positive arguments in favour of the doctrine, than merely to examine and answer objections. At the same time such objections will not be wholly lost sight of, especially those which have been advanced by recent writers, or are suggested by the tone of modern criticism and the circumstances of modern society

It is no new edifice that we seek to construct. We would but maintain the old, and encourage men to dwell securely beneath its shelter, by shewing the strength of its foundations and the rock whereon it is built. It is at least certain that the large, the overwhelming majority of the followers of Christ—the

members of that unique society, called the Church, which has existed so long, and wrought such wonders in the world—have regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Founder of Christianity, and have acknowledged Him to be God and Lord. Into this city of God we were all of us admitted at our baptism: of its means of grace, its high privileges, its freedom, its citizenship, we are all by profession partakers. Thankful shall I be if I am able to shew that there are reasonable grounds for clinging fast to that which Catholic Christendom has ever held—that which we learnt at our mothers' knees and from our fathers' lips—that which we have been taught in catechism and creed—which we have expressed in prayer and confession and eucharistic hymn—that as Jesus of Nazareth is the builder of our city, "its builder and maker is God." Far more thankful shall I be if this attempt, I will not say to establish, but honestly to set forth the claims of our Divine Lord, shall be the means of removing a painful doubt from any heart, or of rousing one amongst us to see that the question of those claims must be settled by each one of us for himself; and that in this matter apathy and neglect are sinful. Greater still will be the gain, if we are all of us led to rest our faith so firmly on the broad platform of the incontrovertible, objective, historic truths of Christianity, that no *à priori* reasonings, and no critical exceptions can overthrow or even shake it. But above, infi-

nately above, all these results, there is one for which I pray, that our study of Holy Scripture may not only satisfy our judgment, but deepen our inner conviction that Jesus is very God—that the voice of Scripture without us and the voice of the Spirit within, may testify to the same truth in unison so perfect that we may never detect a discord between them. As the grounds of our belief become more clear to the understanding may our experience of the truth become deeper and more habitual—so that trusting in Jesus of Nazareth as our Saviour, and adoring and serving Him as our God, we may each one have “the witness in himself”!

Every science has its axioms. These axioms are truths so simple and elementary, that though incapable of proof, they are intuitively admitted and accepted. Till they are so admitted, no demonstration is possible. Now religion has its axioms, and this one is common to natural and revealed religion, that an humble teachable posture of mind is the proper attitude of a creature towards the Creator, of the finite towards the Infinite. If this is generally true, it is more obviously so of those investigations which concern the being and nature of God, and our own relation to Him. A childlike heart, a deep sense of ignorance, a desire to be taught by God, continual prayer for light and guidance, these are conditions of progress in religious knowledge. At least they are the conditions imposed by Jesus

Himself on those who would understand His doctrine. In opposition to this a modern writer tells us, "Displaying before us abundantly the materials of judgment, He (the Supremely Wise) elicits our power; *never commanding us to become little children*, but always inviting our minds to grow up into manhood<sup>1</sup>." A profligate life is not a more certain hindrance to the attainment of this knowledge than a proud, self-satisfied, self-sufficing spirit. The meek will God guide in judgment, and the meek He will teach His way. This humility of heart, this willingness to be taught, has been most conspicuous in men of the greatest intellect. Important in the prosecution of all scientific or literary study, in religion it is essential. It constitutes that moral receptivity, without which we have no right to look for progress or success. If genuine, it will take us often from our study-table to our knees, and in patient waiting on the Fountain of all wisdom, looking up to our heavenly Father for the promised teaching of the Holy Spirit, we shall acquire better and truer lore than books or teachers can supply. God will reveal His Son not only *to* us, but *in* us, and we shall find in the realities of personal experimental Christianity that to which all true theology bears witness, and without which the most elaborate system of evidence, or the most plausible of mythic theories, or the most sentimental dreams of religious fiction, are

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Newman's *Discourse against Hero-making*, p. 25, 1864.



alike practically worthless. It is as unphilosophical as it is unchristian to regard God as the author of moral influences, and not as the source of intellectual light. They who most deeply feel their dependence on Him for everything will penetrate farthest under His guidance into the mysteries of the seen and the unseen world. Frail, feeble, foolish creatures as they are, He takes His children by the hand and leads them into the very *adytum* of truth, that they may "dwell in the secret place of the Most High." And there they learn the things of which their Master spoke when He said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight!"

## LECTURE II.

### *THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS.*

JOHN VII. 12.

*And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but He deceiveth the people.*

“IN what single moral or religious quality Jesus was superior to Paul, I find myself unable to say<sup>1</sup>.” Such is the deliberate statement of one who has told us that “the beginning and foundation” of his faith in years long since past was “an unhesitating, unconditional acceptance of whatever was found in the Bible.” In the course of less than fifty years he has learnt that the picture of Jesus in the fourth Gospel is “essentially irreconcilable with that in the three which precede, and is neither trustworthy nor credible<sup>2</sup>.” He has further arrived at the conclusion that “into the narratives and discourses of Jesus so much of legendary error has crept, that we may write or wrangle about Him for ever<sup>3</sup>,” and having thus spent his great powers of mind, and wellnigh half a century of study in learning to dis-

<sup>1</sup> Newman's *Discourse against Hero-making*, p. 28, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> *Phases of Faith*, p. 1, 6th ed. 1860.

<sup>3</sup> *Discourse*, p. 28.

believe the four Evangelists, from whom alone (on his own shewing) he can know anything of Jesus, he tells the world that he really cannot say in what single moral or religious quality Jesus was superior to Paul. If the Gospels are false, how can he know enough of Jesus to compare Him with Paul? Such criticism is suicidal, and its author, while thinking himself safely perched in the tree of knowledge, has really been cutting through the bough which supports him. If, on the other hand, the narratives of the Gospel are in any sense historically true, then I hope to shew that they record the life of One in whom every "moral and religious quality" (to adopt Mr Newman's phrase) was developed in perfection, and who therefore can in respect of these qualities be compared with Paul, or any other of His followers, only as the perfect with the imperfect, the infinite with the finite.

It might seem that statements so extreme as that I have quoted are unworthy of refutation or even of notice. And yet it is instructive to observe the want of argumentative justice which they involve—the intellectual blindness, or perverted moral sense, of which they are the offspring. No fair comparison can be instituted between the religious qualities of Jesus and Paul without a reference to the genuine writings of the latter which have come down to us. From a man's correspondence we may learn less of the incidents of his life than from a formal

biography, but we learn more of *the man*. Now from St Paul's Epistles we gather the following particulars: that at a certain period in his life he had a vision of Jesus which produced an entire change in his religious conduct and character: that whereas he had previously regarded Jesus as an impostor, he thenceforward worshiped Him as God, devoted his energies exclusively to preaching Jesus and the resurrection, and described himself as having no hope, or motive, or happiness, which was not involved in this new, but powerful faith. Nay, he assures us of his attachment to Jesus in terms so strong as might have laid him open to a charge of extravagant hero-worship, had we not his own declaration that "the Jesus of Nazareth," born of the seed of David according to the flesh, was "over all, God blessed for ever." To compare then the religious character of St Paul with that of Jesus Christ, is to institute a comparison from which the Apostle himself would have shrunk with utter abhorrence. Whether he was right or wrong in his estimate of their respective moral qualities, such passages as the following clearly shew what that estimate was, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "God hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." St Paul regarded himself as a sinner, and Jesus as free from all taint of sin; himself as needing

an atonement by reason of his sin, Jesus as making that atonement by virtue of His sinlessness. And if it should be said that St Paul displayed the virtue of humility in his estimate of himself, we can have no high opinion of his "*religious* qualities," if his estimate of Jesus was wrong. For surely to worship a sinful man as God is not religion, but blind superstition and idolatry.

The comparison of Jesus, as to His moral and religious character, with any mere man, is of course only possible for those who doubt or deny the Deity of our Blessed Lord. But the result must in every case be such as that at which we have just arrived in the case of St Paul. If there is one fact of Christian history which we may regard as beyond question, it is this—that of the first followers of Christ, the four of whose lives we have any considerable particulars, St Luke, St Peter, St Paul, and St John, firmly believed in the Godhead of Jesus. Three of the four have distinctly stated that belief, and have also ascribed to Him as man, moral and religious perfection. Indeed in the mind of a pious Jew such perfection was absolutely inseparable from the object of his worship. And while these four writers would one and all have confessed that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," they would have considered it equally an act of self-deception to attribute sinlessness to any other, save to Jesus of Nazareth. Could all be so blind as to

have overlooked their Master's imperfections, if he had any, or so dishonest, as to have denied their existence? To believe this is to display credulity worthy of an infidel.

But dropping comparison, let us turn to the Synoptic Gospels, and see how far this belief in the moral perfection of Jesus is supported by the narratives of His life. It is not a little remarkable, that those who in modern times have denied the human perfection of our Lord, have directed their attacks not against His personal character or private conduct, but against His official acts and the doctrine which He taught. They have felt that there is nothing in the Gospel narrative to bear out the charge which the Evangelists honestly record as having been urged during our Lord's ministry, that He was "a gluttonous man and a winebibber," addicted to sensual pleasures and depraved associates. All must admit that to unsullied purity of outward life, the negative side of virtue, He added wondrous goodness in its active form of beneficence; that not useless and ascetic austerity, but noble unselfishness and self-sacrifice were the law of His being. As St John tells us (and we may credit his report, for it agrees in substance with the reports of the Synoptists), Jesus put the fearless challenge to those who had abundant opportunities of observing Him, and whose malice prompted them to watch Him closely, "Which of you convinceth me of

5:46 sin?" The challenge was not accepted. At least the Evangelist says nothing of any reply on the part of the Jews, save the general one, that He was "a Samaritan, and had a devil." This abuse was doubtless called forth, not by any flaw which they had detected in the life or actions or spirit of Jesus, but by the rebuke which our Lord had just administered.

It is most important to establish the absolute freedom from sin which characterized our Blessed Lord as the Son of Man; for if this be admitted, we shall have less difficulty in accepting His teaching as authoritative, and bowing reverently to His claims of Messiahship and Deity. We shall not then, with Renan, regard Him as conniving at the false ideas which His hearers entertained on the most momentous subjects, or speak of Him as employing like Joan of Arc an "innocent artifice"<sup>1</sup> to gain adherents. So exclusive has been the attention bestowed of late years on the *human* life of our Lord, that men have begun to regard Him as altogether such an one as themselves. Forgetting His perfect Godhead in the close study of His humanity, they have passed on imperceptibly to conclusions which cannot consist with a belief in His Godhead at all, or even with a belief in His human goodness. It is in this doctrine of the sinlessness of the man Christ Jesus that we have the one key which will

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*, p. 133, Eng. ed.

unlock the mystery of that unique human life. Accept the doctrine, and all becomes, I will not say clear, for great and profound is the mystery of godliness, but consistent and harmonious. Reject it, and the narratives of the Evangelists become strangely contradictory and confused, and must be ruthlessly tampered with, before even the wretched fictions can be produced which have been offered to the Church of the 19th century as 'Lives of Jesus.'

Let us test this doctrine by the phenomena of the first three Gospels. And, first, we observe that Jesus is represented by all three Evangelists as claiming the power of working miracles. The question is not whether He actually wrought them or not, but whether He openly asserted or at least tacitly admitted His ability to perform them. If we believe the miraculous power of Jesus, we shall be led by the old route of evidential proof to the conclusion which I seek to establish. But I am now endeavouring to establish it by a method more in accordance with the temper and the thought of the present day. I am willing to suppose, for argument's sake, that the theory of Strauss or that of Renan is correct, and that the *fact* of the miracles must be abandoned. Even if this be so, at least it is certain that the Evangelists not only ascribed to Jesus miraculous powers, but that they represent Him as claiming for Himself such powers. These claims are of such various kinds, and repeated under



so many different circumstances, that we cannot doubt that whether Jesus believed that He possessed superhuman<sup>1</sup> powers or not, He permitted, He encouraged, He taught, He commanded others to believe it. Both St Matthew and St Luke record the mission of the two disciples of John the Baptist, who came to Christ with the question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" "In the same hour," we are told, "Jesus cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight<sup>2</sup>." It has always seemed to me extraordinary that any one could explain away the reality of miracles, wrought in such presence and in answer to such a question. But assuming that they were only apparent, that Jesus was a clever physician or mesmerist, and able to work a multitude of instantaneous cures; or that, as others will have it, no *real* cures were effected; still if there be any fragment of historic truth in the narrative at all, Jesus sent back the messengers of John to their master with a report, not that *one* miracle but that many and divers miracles had been wrought before their eyes. It is important to notice the necessity of this conclusion. The question was not, "Art thou Elias, the forerunner?" but "Art thou the

<sup>1</sup> I prefer this word to *supernatural*; because it may be that miracles are only the result of the operation of

some *undiscovered* natural law.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vii. 21; comp. Matt. xi. 5.

Messiah?" Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος; And a report of wonderful *natural* cures would have been no answer to *that* question at all. If Jesus was the Messiah, our present discussion is superfluous, for His moral perfection is bound up in His Messiahship<sup>1</sup>. But if He was not the Christ whom John expected, and yet sent to John a message calculated to deceive him on the subject, it is hard to reconcile such disingenuousness with the general truthfulness of Jesus. It is worse than idle to say that our Lord practised an "innocent artifice." Must we not regard such miserable criticism as the result of a philosophy which, while affecting to set free the intellect, enslaves and debases the moral faculty<sup>2</sup>? The notice of this incident by M. Renan is very meagre and superficial, indeed it would have been dangerous for him to analyse it fairly. But he admits that the works which Jesus enumerated and performed were those which ought to characterize the coming of the kingdom of God. And yet, if that kingdom be a kingdom of *truth*, how can we believe that the King at the very outset practised deception—a pious fraud, forsooth! on His impri-

<sup>1</sup> See Dr Reinke's *Dissertatio de Divina Messiae Natura in Libris Sacris Veteris Testamenti*. Monasterii Westphaliorum, 1836.

<sup>2</sup> "A truly pious and at the same time truly upright man will regard a pious fraud as superadding to the general atrocity of falsehood the additional guilt of profane and impious

presumption in making free with God's name, and saying (virtually), 'Thus saith the Lord,' when the Lord hath not spoken." Abp. Whately's *Miscellaneous Remains*, p. 215. Comp. some forcible remarks to the same effect in Dr Mill's work on the *Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*, p. 61, ed. 2.

soned herald and forerunner? This was not a weakness incident to human imperfection. It was fraud practised without any such object as even a Jesuit moralist would have approved of, and by One from whose general character it was wholly alien<sup>1</sup>. Nor was this a solitary instance. In the case of the woman whose issue of blood was healed at the word of Jesus, as St Matthew relates the incident, or by the touch of His garment, as related by St Mark, two particulars are to be noticed, 1st, that the woman regarded Him as endowed with superhuman powers; and, 2ndly, that so far from disclaiming such powers, our Lord ascribed the woman's cure to this very belief on her part: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." It is beside the purpose to say that faith in the skill of a physician is acknowledged to be conducive to the recovery of the sick. Jesus never pretended to be a mere physician. It was as a teacher of morals and religion that He demanded the submission and the allegiance of mankind. And His character as a moral teacher would have been overthrown, had those whom He healed been able afterwards to say, "The Master who cured our bodies cared nothing for our souls. We believed a lie, and He told us that such belief was the means by

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the passage already quoted from the *Remains* of the late Abp. Whately, there is one so characteristic, and withal so pertinent, that I cannot forbear to subjoin it: "A truly honest and conscientious minis-

ter will not dare to leave any one in darkness whom he is able to enlighten; or to practise or to connive at anything of a pious fraud on the ground of a supposed expediency." p. 376.

which we were restored to health." The same remarks apply to the cure of the two blind men recorded by St Matthew (ix. 27, &c.) and to many other instances.

If we had not St John's Gospel, we should yet gather from the other Evangelists that Jesus, so far from disclaiming superhuman power, so far from denying (as St Peter denied<sup>1</sup>) that by His own power or holiness He had wrought wonders among the people, intended His miracles to be σημεῖα, tokens and credentials, of His Divine nature and office. If He was sinless, we shall have no difficulty in reconciling such claims with His supposed character. But if He was not absolutely free from sin, if He was not, while sharing man's nature, exempt from man's moral imperfections, we are driven to a conclusion which must be fatal to all confidence in Him as a teacher or as a guide.

But again, unless Jesus was sinless, we must not only believe that He habitually practised and encouraged deception in reference to His own claims, but that He was influenced by the worldly vanity and ambition which He so strongly condemned in others. He who forbade His disciples to assume or to bear the title of Master, assigned this as the reason of the prohibition, that He was their one and only Master and Lord. Had He stopped here, we might have acquitted Him of vanity. We might have regarded this self-assertion as justifiable in a great

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 12.

religious reformer, the founder of a new religious system. But Jesus claimed to be more than Master. St Matthew tells that when to our Lord's enquiry, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus did not correct him as being mistaken. He did not say, "Your attachment to me has blinded your judgment. I am not the Christ." Far, very far from it. This was his answer, "Blessed art thou, Simon, Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The same Evangelist records the interview between Jesus and the mother of Zebedee's children. She came to Jesus and asked Him to grant that her two sons might sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. His reply is unfortunately rendered in the Authorized English version. By the omission of the words in italics, which are inserted to the prejudice of the sense, it will run thus, That which you ask "is not mine to give save to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." Now if we suppose with M. Renan that in this, as in many similar instances, our Lord acted *bonâ fide*, that He really fancied Himself to be Messiah the Prince, of whom Daniel had prophesied, and for whom the Jews were looking—if we assume that "the admiration of His disciples carried Him away<sup>1</sup>," that He was lifted

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*, English ed. p. 83.

on the wave of circumstances, and stranded on these high pretensions without aim or effort of His own—we have before us the strange yet inevitable conclusion, that One whose great characteristic was lowliness and humility was betrayed into the habitual and systematic indulgence of a pitiable vanity by the adulation of His own followers. And that this vanity should have still been the ruling passion when He stood in the high-priest's palace and in Pilate's judgment-hall, when all His followers had forsaken Him, and one had betrayed Him and one had denied Him, that danger and suffering did not dissipate it, but that it retained possession of Him to the last—this involves an inconsistency which may make us doubt the reality of the portrait thus presented, or moral weakness, which, however suited to the character of the Arabian impostor, would be fatal to the character which Christians ascribe to the Founder of their religion.

In one other and most important particular we have to choose between accepting the doctrine for which I contend, and admitting the truth of a charge which (if established) would entirely destroy the moral value of our Lord's death. It has been often urged, sometimes openly and sometimes by implication against Jesus, that by needlessly provoking opposition and hostility He threw away His life. This charge has been clearly stated by the writer to whom reference has been often made

already<sup>1</sup>. He asserts with truth that all Christendom has always believed that the death of Jesus was voluntarily incurred. He points out that when Jesus resolved to go up to Jerusalem He was warned by His disciples of His danger; but so far was He from being blind to it, that He distinctly announced to them that He knew He should die in Jerusalem the shameful death of a malefactor. On His arrival in the suburbs His first act was to ride into the city amidst the acclamations of the multitude in order to exhibit Himself as having a just right to the throne of David. He thus gave a handle to imputations of intended treason. He provoked the indignation of the magistrates and others by turning the traffickers out of the temple. He hurled terrible denunciations against priests and scribes and influential Pharisees and rulers. And when He had thus incurred the rage of His own countrymen so that they thirsted for His life, and had given colour to the charge of political rebellion, He put Himself deliberately into the power of His enemies, and knowing that His hour was come and who it was that should betray Him, He sought and found death.

If this conduct of Jesus be fairly weighed in the balance of human ethics, most men will say with Professor Newman, that it was neither laudable nor justifiable, but far otherwise; and apart from the

<sup>1</sup> *Phases of Faith*, p. 159.

gross moral delinquency which must dethrone Him from His seat as a great religious teacher, we detect once more such inconsistency as to throw discredit on the whole truth of the Gospel narratives. That He who refused at the devil's bidding to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, who eluded the murderous hands of the men of Nazareth, who more than once sought safety from His countrymen's anger in flight, and who in the very hour of His apprehension assured His followers that He had at His command more than twelve legions of angels<sup>1</sup>,—that He should voluntarily provoke a shameful death at the early age of little more than thirty years, this involves an inconsistency which might shake our faith in the historic truth of the Gospels altogether. We should be required to believe in a series of psychological marvels which will tax our credulity far more than those miraculous accounts which were believed by Bacon and Newton, but, without fresh data, are neglected as impossible by some modern *savans*. We must believe that Jesus of Nazareth was a man of the most simple truth-loving character, who yet practised habitual systematic deception on His followers; that being eminently unworldly and unselfish, His whole heart was filled and His acts prompted by vanity and hollow ambition; that knowing better than other men the value and the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 53.



mystery of life. and feeling more deeply than other men His moral responsibility, He purposely rushed on a death which he might have avoided. We must believe further that those who knew Him best, and who have united with Him in giving its moral tone and standard to Christendom, regarded such a character and life as morally perfect, and that from this source of falsehood and vanity and violence have flowed streams of truth and righteousness and peace which have for eighteen centuries purified and refreshed a sick and weary world.

From such conclusions we can only escape by one path, that trodden by those best qualified to be our guides. All the writers of the New Testament without exception believed in the moral perfection, the entire sinlessness of Jesus of Nazareth. With the higher nature which they attributed to Him we are not at present concerned. I am simply testing the correctness of their belief in the perfection of His human nature—a belief, be it remembered, which from the day of St John to our own, not only has never died out, but has been maintained and cherished by the large majority of those who bear the name of Christ. Among these may be reckoned men of independent thought, of judicial acumen, of scientific attainment, of pure life, of charitable spirit—men who like Paul had groaned under the burden of their own sin, and had found comfort and strength in the sinlessness of Jesus. Theological dogmas

apart, it is quite certain that in every age of the Church Jesus of Nazareth has been the object of worship, of trust, of imitation to thousands who would have neither worshiped, trusted, nor imitated Him had they doubted His moral perfection. They who regard Him as God cannot believe that Deity could be united to a sinful humanity, perfect holiness to imperfect morality, in one and the self-same Person. They who trust in Him as an atoning Saviour will not believe that He needed an atonement for Himself. While they who seek to regulate their lives by His life are assured that every step they set in the footprints of Jesus brings them nearer to God. This assurance would be destroyed, had His steps ever strayed or His feet gone out of the way.

I have endeavoured to point out to-day some of the results to which a denial of the moral perfection of Jesus must inevitably bring us. I see not how any man can logically acquiesce in such a denial without rejecting the historical origin of Christianity and the story of the Founder's life as a cunningly, but not very skilfully, devised fable. If we are not prepared for such a conclusion, let us see how far the assertion of the sinlessness of Jesus of Nazareth agrees with the phenomena of His life. This I hope to do in the next Lecture, and I trust to be able then to shew not only that the doctrine of our Lord's sinlessness is in harmony both with the ge-

neral tenour and the more detailed phenomena of the Gospels, but that it is not an ultimatum. It is a truth, not a complete truth—a stage in our investigation, of the utmost importance and essential to the conclusion, not the conclusion itself. I believe that we can no more stop at the establishment of our Lord's human perfection than we could stop at its denial, if we would criticise Scripture honestly, and reason justly.

It may be said that we have not distinctly referred the character of Jesus to any definite moral standard. And yet surely in the use of the words *sin* and *sinlessness* such a standard is implied. It has been well observed by an able writer, that we never speak of *virtue* as an attribute of God. He might have added that few persons, if any, apply the term *virtuous* to Jesus. Can the reason of this be that men instinctively shrink from sitting in judgment on the Son of Man, and testing His character by the moral maxims which they apply to themselves and one another? However this may be, it is certain that the true idea of moral perfection in man is the perfect agreement of human will with the will of God. The will of God as revealed in the Bible bears upon our relation to *Him* as well as to our fellow-men. And when we say of Jesus that He knew no sin, we mean that His will was in both respects in such perfect harmony with the will of His heavenly Father, that in no moment of His life,

in no wish or thought, in no word or act, was there the faintest discord or contrariety between them.

Can we contemplate such an One as this, One in human form, the sharer of human weakness, the victim of human want and pain, One tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin—can we think of Him, as at once so near us yet so far above us, without inly exulting at the hope which is thus disclosed? If One born of woman has possessed this moral perfection, then there is hope for all the race. Then God has not forgotten His sinful, rebellious children, nor doomed them to wander for ever at a distance from their home. He has not left them to the guidance of their instincts, or fancies, or sentiments. He has given them a perfect Example, and He has lighted their path with a reflection of His own uncreated glory. Then is there hope, nay, an assurance that sin shall not always have dominion; that sorrow, its firstborn, shall be banished; and death, sin's penalty, shall be no more exacted. The devil shall be bruised, man shall be restored, and Jesus the sinless man, Jesus the Lord Omnipotent, shall reign for ever and ever.

## LECTURE III.

### *THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS.*

1 PETER II. 22, part.

*Who did no sin.*

IN the last Lecture I endeavoured to shew that the life of Jesus as described by the Evangelists must present insuperable difficulties to those who deny His moral perfection as the Son of Man. Such denial, accompanied as it ever is by the rejection of His claims to miraculous powers and a Divine nature, must lead in all logical fairness to the abandonment of the Gospels as historic records, and ultimate disbelief in the person and religion of Jesus. Unhappily, instances are not wanting of men who having started from such denial have drifted ever onward over a trackless sea of religious speculations till they have landed at last on the dreary shore of practical atheism. It may be that such instances are rare; that some who admit the premiss do not accept the conclusion. Yet if the legitimate conclusion is one from which we shrink, it is because the premiss is false; because Jesus of Nazareth, perfect man though He was, yet was free from all taint of human sin. His will was at every moment of His

life in entire agreement with the will of God. In Him at all times was the Father well pleased.

And now let us see how consistent this view of the human nature of Jesus is with the portraits presented to us by the Evangelists. There is one characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth which though not thrust upon our notice, or reiterated in set terms, has impressed the minds of all who read the Gospel narratives with attention, and has been specially pointed out by a recent writer in a work of great notoriety. I allude to that deep, unbroken tranquility of soul, that profound calm within, which lay too deep for the storms even of His troubled life to ruffle it. In many, perhaps most of those who have played a distinguished part on the world's stage, who have been the leaders of thought or of action to their fellow-men, this equipoise of soul (for it is more than a balance of mind) this inward calm has been conspicuously wanting. Some few men of cold, stoical temperament may by the force of circumstances be thrown up above the surface of society, as pebbles are washed up by the sea-wave or shot into the air by the action of a volcano. Some have marched on to conquest and distinction over the prostrate minds or bodies of their fellows, heedless as the car of Juggernaut or the wild tornado of the havoc they have made. But such insensate, heartless conduct no one would ascribe to Jesus of Nazareth. And it may be, after all, that the world's

stoics, if undisturbed by the sentiment of pity, are the slaves or the playthings of passion or of pride. Most men of lofty views are subject to alternations of elation and depression, the result of a susceptibility of temperament which is especially sympathetic. To this sympathy they owe the influence which they exercise on other men. And yet in Jesus Christ, grand as was the object which He proposed to Himself, magnificent beyond all parallel the end on which His heart was set, we detect no flutter of vanity, no eager panting of ambition, no cowardly apprehension of failure, no despair, nor even despondency in the hour of danger and of death. If we remember that He came not like Moses to propound a law, not like many a Jewish prophet to restore the religious and moral tone of his countrymen, not like the Baptist to herald a coming Messiah, but that He felt it was His vocation to establish a world-wide kingdom, and to save His subjects from sin and destruction, then we may gaze with admiration approaching to awe upon the holy calm with which His soul was filled. A Galilean peasant conceives and sets Himself to carry out a work harder and grander than entered the mind of Alexander or Napoleon in their wildest dreams of ambition. In the prosecution of His design, in the midst of circumstances most calculated to disturb the equanimity of ordinary men, Jesus preserves inward peace and tranquillity for which but one explanation can be

given. "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," He allowed no murmur to escape His lips. Perfect man in His susceptibility to pain, He asked, that if it were possible the cup of agony might pass from Him. Perfect in submission to the will of God, He added, "Yet not my will, but thine be done."

The whole description of the passion and crucifixion of our Lord, though given by the Evangelists with some variation in the details, yet must, I think, convey to any unprejudiced reader the impression, that under suffering the most intense, both bodily and mental, Jesus maintained the same inward calm for which He had been remarkable during His earthly ministry. The character of Jesus, as we may gather it from the Gospel, is free alike from cowardice and presumption. In the wise caution with which He avoided danger we detect no undignified haste, no weak abandonment of purpose, no concession of principle. In the fearless reproof which He uttered, the denunciation against sin and hypocrisy and irreligion, there is no tone of personal asperity, no ebullition of ill-temper, no needless provocation of hostility. Once only is He said to have looked on men with anger; but it was not caused by any insult or injury offered to Himself; it was righteous indignation, such as a good man may feel and sin not. Of the countless misrepresentations with which Renan's "Life of Jesus" abounds, this is one. He



tells us that in driving the traffickers out of the Temple, Jesus was "carried away by His anger." The incident is mentioned by all four Evangelists. St John alone mentions "the scourge of small cords" which Jesus used, and he tells us that there were "sheep and oxen" to be expelled as well as men<sup>2</sup>. But without laying undue stress on this fact, we may observe that so far as the fourfold narrative is concerned, there is no hint of our Lord being "carried away by anger." It was "the zeal of God's house," by which He was absorbed; and for this explanation we are indebted to St John only—the Evangelist, be it remembered, who asserts most clearly the Godhead of Jesus.

And as we detect no surging of earthly passion in the soul of Jesus, so we see no flash of earthly joy lighting up the dark valley through which His path lay. As He had checked the carnal indignation of the sons of Zebedee, so He had corrected the misplaced and selfish rejoicing of His disciples. But as once He was angry, so once, once only, He is said to have rejoiced. And as His anger was provoked, not by wrong offered to Himself, but by despite done to the grace and love of His heavenly Father, so that joy, so touching, as one bright spot in the

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 14, 15. It is curious to observe how writers who reject the Gospel of St John as unauthentic, quote from it when it serves their pur-

pose to do so. The shaft that pierces the eagle is winged with his own feather.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note (B).

life of the Man of Sorrows, was not exultation at His own success, or triumph over His adversaries. It was a joy, welling up from the depths of a soul in close union with Godhead, at the contemplation of the mysteries of the Divine counsels. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight<sup>1</sup>."

And this perfect tranquillity of soul, thus unbroken by passion, unimpaired by the weakness of a mortal nature, and wholly superior to the most adverse external influences, was proof against those inward misgivings which are almost inseparable from pure efforts in a sinful world. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Luther—these, the greatest of social and religious reformers, under pressure of opposition from without, and lack of sympathy around, and failure of faith within them, each in turn sate down despondent before his work was done, ready to turn back ere the goal was reached, or to abandon the object to which his life was devoted. No such misgiving seems to have thrown a shadow over the soul of Jesus of Nazareth. From first to last He persevered in His wondrous task. Weariness, opposition, desertion, danger, all combined, could not stop Him. He finished the work which was

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 21. Comp. Matt. xi. 25, 26.

given Him to do ; finished it without misgiving or hesitation or murmur. It is a gratuitous assumption of the French *novelist* (shall I call him ?) that Jesus in His last agony "saw only the ingratitude of men," and that "He perhaps repented suffering for a vile race<sup>1</sup>." If the narratives are to be our guide, He no more repented of the work He had undertaken when hanging on the cross than He repents it now when in the salvation of each penitent sinner He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

And this thought suggests another feature in our Lord's history, which is in perfect keeping with the theory of His sinlessness, and with no other supposition. If that wondrous calm of which I have spoken be, as I believe, the result of a moral harmony within Him, a perfect agreement between the human will of Jesus and a law external to Him, even the will of His heavenly Father, we must attribute to the same cause (for no other is adequate) our Lord's undeviating onward progress both personally and officially. As a teacher, a prophet, the founder of a religious society, He never corrected Himself, never contradicted Himself, never built the

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Life of Jesus*, p. 290.

Of such repentance there is not a hint in the Gospel narrative. That exceeding bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" implies no regret at the work He had undertaken and the suffering it involved. From the outset of His earthly ministry He had foreseen the decease

which He must ere long accomplish at Jerusalem, and the cry wrung from Him in the hour of its accomplishment by the agony He endured, was not the expression of recreant weakness ; it was nature, sinless human nature, uttering its instinctive protest against sin as the cause of suffering.

lesson of to-day on the ruins of yesterday's discourse, or limited the generality of a hasty maxim by the result of wider induction. Say what you will of the great Prophet of Nazareth, you cannot say that He ever retraced a step or retracted a word. Can you say as much of any mere man without calling him very blind and very obstinate too? And yet, as regards what we commonly call intellectual culture or attainments, there is nothing to place our Lord on a higher level than many of those whose public career has wanted the unity by which His whole life was characterized. As a child He increased in wisdom with advancing years; but we read nothing in Scripture of any remarkable displays of original genius or power of apprehending or acquiring secular knowledge. In this, as in other respects, His character was at once "perfectly human, and devoid of human peculiarities<sup>1</sup>." We cannot, therefore, ascribe His superior consistency of life to His adoption of a purer or more practical system of ethical and social philosophy than other reformers have espoused. If He never retraced a step, it was because no step He set was doubtful or false. If His teaching was uniform, it was because He spake with authority, and as never man spake.

<sup>1</sup> See a letter by Professor Goldwin Smith, prefixed to an able Sermon by Rev. S. J. Hulme, preached

before the University of Oxford, *Christ the Revealer of the Will of God.* Oxford, J. H. and J. Parker.

Whether then we regard the surface of the life of Christ, His words and deeds, they are marked by undeviating consistency; or whether we contemplate the prevailing tone of His mind, the permanent condition of His inner life, it is a deep, unbroken tranquillity, a perfect, never-varying balance of soul. This outward uniformity and this inward calm, each absolutely perfect, yet both maintained under circumstances the most trying and adverse, are unique phenomena in human history, for which one and but one adequate cause can be assigned. I do not assert that these phenomena at once suggest and enforce the inference that Jesus was perfectly free from sin. But knowing that the disturbing element in human life is sin—knowing that the wicked are like the troubled sea, shifting, wavering, restless, that to such there is no peace, —I say that if the creed of Christendom is correct, if Jesus is (as His followers have held in every age) absolutely sinless, I should expect to find in Him those very characteristics of which we have spoken. Had they been wanting, we might have doubted His moral perfection. Their presence is in agreement with, and so far a confirmation of, the belief that Jesus of Nazareth knew no sin.

But there is yet another feature in our Lord's character, which, if honestly considered, must to a pious mind carry a strong conviction of His sinless purity—I mean His own unconsciousness of sin. I suppose no law of our spiritual life is more inflex-

ible than this, that the better a man becomes, the more sensible he is of his own defects. If it is by the contemplation and imitation of the Divine perfections, by union and communion with God, that man grows in holiness and in likeness to God, this spiritual growth will be ever commensurate with his progress in the knowledge both of himself and of God. And while his heart and his life become really purer, his standard of holiness becomes higher, his ability to detect sin more sensitive, his distrust of self more habitual, his hatred of sin more instinctive. Like the Alpine traveller, the higher he ascends the more sensible is he of the vastness of the summits yet to be scaled. The nearer he approaches to the source of light, the more manifest become his own defects. In every age of the Church the ever-deepening sense of sin and unworthiness has been the mark of the advanced saint of God. In the writings of Paul and Peter and John the expression of this feeling is frequent, while the traces of it are everywhere discernible. In the lives of all the true saints of God the sense of their sin has been a conspicuous feature. As the saintly Leighton says in that great sermon on "The nature and properties of heavenly wisdom," "The most purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity." I might go one step further, and speak of the result of this sense of sin: how it has led good men to seek an atonement for their sin, and righteous men to

seek a better righteousness than their own. But I will not weaken my position by narrowing its ground. If it be true that in the holiest and best of men a sense of their sin is commensurate ever with their progress in holiness, and if this sense of sin (as Christian biography abundantly demonstrates) finds its expression in words and acts of repentance, in retraction, and regret, and restitution,—how is it that from the first chapter of Matthew to the last of John we read nothing of such expression on the part of Jesus? Does He call Himself the chief of sinners, as did St Paul<sup>1</sup>? Does He, like St Peter<sup>2</sup>, rejoice in a vicarious sacrifice for His sins? Like St John<sup>3</sup>, does He bless One who has loved Him and washed Him from His sins in His own blood? Like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, does He include Himself in an exhortation to lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us<sup>4</sup>? Far, very far otherwise. In all His discourses, whether addressed to His disciples or to the multitudes, often as He warned men against sin, both in its grosser and more subtle forms, He never once either directly or by implication included Himself in the prohibition. He always spoke as if from a higher platform; He spoke as one who could sympathise with all the human frailty of His hearers, as one who needed not that any should testify to Him of man, for that He knew what was in man, but yet as one

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 24.<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 5.<sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 1, 2.

who was exempt from the sin which He condemned, and who needed not the pardon which He promised and bestowed. And while in His conversations with men He betrayed no consciousness of sin, in the glimpses which we have of His intercourse with Heaven, the same unconsciousness is apparent. Mingling with His prayers for support under suffering there is no confession of sin, no cry to God for its forgiveness. When I remember the candour of the Evangelists, their evident freedom from dishonest artifice, I cannot but think that the silence of Jesus on this matter was real—that He neither believed Himself, nor encouraged others to believe, that He had any sin to confess. And if it were so, then of a truth that silence is more eloquent and more convincing than a thousand disclaimers. And unless we are prepared to accept our Lord's estimate of Himself—and say that He confessed no sin because He knew no sin—we must charge Him with such spiritual blindness and self-deception as would be fatal at once to His character as a man and His claims as a religious teacher.

And as Jesus never confessed sin to God or man, so in the few instances which are recorded of an audible testimony given to Him from heaven, that testimony, while not asserting, is yet perfectly consistent with, His freedom from sin. To take one—the most signal instance. The Synoptic Evangelists record our Lord's Baptism in the river Jor-



dan. They all tell us, in nearly identical language, that after Jesus came up out of the water a voice came from heaven, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased<sup>1</sup>." Now to those who explain away that celestial utterance as an interpretation put on a thunderclap by the heated imagination of the bystanders, this argument will have little weight. But even if unsound it will not vitiate our reasoning generally, nor invalidate our conclusion. The removal of one pillar will not involve the safety of the edifice. But most persons will agree that this expression of approval, which *each of the first three Evangelists twice affirms* to have come from heaven, and which St Peter records in terms the most distinct and solemn, was a real audible utterance, unless we are to reject testimony altogether, and say that all men are liars. I do not say that this celestial witness decides the controversy; but it is in perfect harmony with the doctrine of our Lord's sinlessness, and will perhaps help to convince many minds of the truth of the doctrine, because the testimony is indirect and co-incidental.

We have thus tested the two estimates of the

<sup>1</sup> John's baptism was 'the baptism of repentance,' but there is no word of repentance here. Others were baptized and washed away their sins, but here we read neither of sins to be washed away, nor of any profession of faith on the part of Jesus, nor any assurance of forgiveness on the part of the Baptist. Heaven is opened, and

a manifest token of Divine approval is given by the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, and a voice comes from the excellent glory, not promising pardon, but expressing the fullest satisfaction and approval. It said not, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," but "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

human character of Jesus by the phenomena of His life. We have seen that the denial of His moral perfection involves results which it is impossible to acquiesce in—results against which reason and experience and the better instincts of humanity alike revolt. We have further applied the opposite estimate of Jesus to the narratives of His life contained in the Gospels, and we have found that the hypothesis of His perfect sinlessness is borne out not only by the detailed events of His history, but by the general tone which pervades the character there described, by the conspicuous absence of some particulars, and the striking, because incidental, mention of others.

I have done little more than indicate one method by which this doctrine of the human sinlessness of Jesus may be established. I have but pointed out the path which leads to such a conclusion.

If any of you, Christian brethren, will study the Gospels with earnest prayer for Divine guidance, applying to each passage of our Lord's life the two theories (and remember there can be but two—for either Jesus was sinless or He was not), you will find everything to confirm and nothing to shake your faith in Jesus, as the pure, the spotless, the sinless Son of Man.

In arriving at this result we have reached a stage in our upward course at which we may pause, but cannot linger. Taking from this position a general survey of the life and character of Jesus, we see in

His moral perfection presumptive grounds for believing that He was, while man, yet more than man—invested with a superhuman and therefore a Divine nature—I say, ‘*therefore* Divine,’ for if the higher nature of Jesus be not Divine, it must be created. And, if it be created, then we must suppose a union of two created intelligences, each endowed with moral responsibility in one and the same person—a conception which may safely be banished to the region of Chimæras and Sphinxes, and there claim precedence in monstrosity.

Now when we review the history of the human race, we observe that as regards physical and intellectual development no one individual has ever been so distinguished above his fellows as to challenge universal admiration—to be the admitted leader and chief—‘*cui nihil viget simile aut secundum.*’ It may fairly be questioned whether as regards man’s bodily constitution, as tested by longevity or muscular development or even freedom from disease, there is any generic progress at all. In the earliest days as in later times there have been *individuals* of huge stature; but these, though surpassing other men, have done so within certain narrow limits; and of these giants you cannot name *one* as so far exceeding the rest of the species as to stand alone without a rival—one whose head has pierced the clouds while his feet rested on the ground. And yet if such an one had ever lived, his physical superiority to the rest of the race could be

measured, as being finite. But the moral superiority of the sinless One to the rest of the human family is greater still; for by the hypothesis it is infinite. Look again at the sages and philosophers of the world—those who have discovered or invented or applied and extended the discoveries of others—and two facts are at once apparent; first, that such men, however distinguished in one department of science, were not distinguished in all branches of human knowledge; and secondly, that no one man has yet arisen, or is likely to arise, as the intellectual head and chief of the whole race. Judging from analogy, I should say that the same law would apply, perhaps even more rigorously, to moral development. I should think that civilization might do more for the body and the mind of man than for his moral nature—and that if it failed to raise the former above a certain fixed level, there was little reason to expect for the latter great excellence, much less unique perfection. And yet here is One born of woman who rises in moral grandeur, not like Ajax in the Grecian host, the highest of earth's demigods, not as the tallest pillar amidst a group of stately columns, not as the highest peak among other peaks of a vast mountain-range, not floating in His unsullied purity above the sin-stained race whose nature He shares; but, like Jacob's ladder—blessed emblem!—resting on this earth of ours and yet reaching far above human pride and passion and sin, penetrating this lower atmosphere of

human life, and stretching ever onwards, ever upwards, till its top enters the high court of heaven itself. It is not in the practice of one virtue that Jesus excelled, but in all; not in one relation of life that He was sinless, but in all. And while Moses the meekest man sinned in anger, and Abraham the father of the faithful in unfaithfulness, and Peter the fearless in cowardice, and John the apostle of love in vindictiveness, Jesus, Jesus alone, never sinned. Let him who knows anything of his own inner life and of the requirements of God's spiritual law say whether the moral superiority of Jesus to himself is or is not as I have described. He who is most closely following and who most nearly resembles Jesus, will confess that as high as the heaven is above the earth so far is the sinlessness of Jesus above his own imperfection and sin.

Such a man, as he gazes with admiration on the unique display of moral perfection, to which he finds nothing analogous in the physical or mental history of the species, may not unreasonably conclude that he has found in Jesus of Nazareth that which by instinct or by tradition men in every age have believed possible or probable—an incarnation of the Deity. And this presumption that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh will be confirmed by many weighty considerations. One only of these can be mentioned now; the rest are of a different order and must be reserved for a future occasion.

No one can deny the fact that since the death of Jesus upon the cross, thousands and tens of thousands of His followers have trusted in *Him* with a confidence such as none ever reposed in a mere man. Many of the holiest and best and wisest, men of the purest life and loftiest aims, have staked their present life and their eternal destiny on their faith in Jesus of Nazareth. The noble army of martyrs, who laid down their lives rather than deny the Master whom they had served, and Who had never wronged them—these all died in faith, trusting in Jesus as their Saviour, and following Him (as they believed) by the path of suffering to everlasting glory. And not they alone, but a countless band of whom the world takes little note; young men and maidens, old men and feeble women, and children of tender age, these all have leaned on Jesus, *while He leaned on none*. They called Him Master and Saviour and Intercessor. He was their strength, their righteousness, their peace, their wisdom, their hope; but I read not that He ever called any man *His* Saviour, or craved a better righteousness than His own. Around that son of the carpenter, that peasant of Galilee, as some take pleasure in styling our Blessed Lord, around that human form once so lowly and so suffering, now so highly exalted and so glorious, there is grouped an exceeding great multitude of worshipers whom no man can number, of all people and nations and kindreds and tribes; and as they bow before

Him, and acknowledge Him, the sinless Son of Man, to be the King of Glory, the Everlasting Son of the Father, He accepts their faith and adoration as His due, nor bids them trust in another.

I cannot forget that some of those who hear me this day have but recently come to the University, and are entering on a new stage of life, a stage the importance of which to themselves, to our country, to the world, can scarcely be overrated. If I had set myself to choose a topic on which to speak to them, I know of none more suitable than that which we have been considering. We have seen that our Blessed Lord enjoyed as man the two blessings which all men most need—inward peace and a clear conscience. As man He possessed these blessings, and as God He imparts them to all who seek them at His hands. Brethren, at the outset of your undergraduate course, on this your first Sunday in Cambridge, in the retirement of your rooms ask for these blessings. To any man this peace is desirable, but to a student especially. Better than Stoic apathy or Brahminical abstraction, it does not destroy but cherish and develope all the kindlier virtues of which man's nature is capable, and all the intellectual faculties with which man is endowed. "*My* peace," He said, "I give unto you." Oh! to share that peace! a peace too deep for life's sorrows to destroy, too vital for death to terminate, but which shall result

in that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for ever.

The other blessing which Jesus as man possessed you cannot have *as* He had, but you may have it as really nevertheless. His conscience was unclouded because He knew no sin. No remembrance of duty omitted or guilt incurred ever stained His pure soul with dark defilement. With us, alas! it is not so. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. But this we know, that the blood of Jesus, when applied by faith, will purge the conscience, and cleanse us from all sin. Seek, I repeat it, brethren, of Him who has purchased them for us, and who is able and ready to impart them, these great, these necessary blessings, pardon and peace. Ask for them in the words of the Collect for this day<sup>1</sup>, ask for them in the words of that sweet prayer of our scriptural Litany, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, Grant us Thy peace, Have mercy upon us!"

<sup>1</sup> Collect for 21st Sunday after Trinity.



## LECTURE IV.

### *THE DIVINE NATURE OF JESUS.*

JOHN I. 14.

*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

“THAT Jesus never dreamt of making Himself pass for an incarnation of God is a matter about which there can be no doubt. Such an idea was wholly foreign to the Jewish mind, and there is no trace of it in the Synoptical Gospels<sup>1</sup>.” This startling passage, when reduced to its simplest terms, consists of two propositions—1st, that the idea of an incarnation of God was wholly foreign to the Jewish mind; and, secondly, that there is no trace in the first three Gospels of Jesus having entertained such an idea in reference to Himself. With the first of these propositions we are not now directly concerned; but it seems to me that, whether true or false, it cannot much affect our decision on the second. It is certainly strange that any one acquainted with

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Life of Jesus*, p. 181, Eng. ed.

the Old Testament should fail to find in those records of the Jewish people what we find imbedded in the creeds of almost all Gentile races, and expressed in their mythology. It would be no difficult matter to shew that the idea of an incarnation was one with which the Jews of our Lord's time must have been familiar. But were it otherwise, were Renan as correct in his statement as he is confident, surely if Jesus came in any sense to make a revelation from God, if He was in any true sense a prophet, it was quite within His mission to enlarge the circle of His hearers' ideas, as well as to rectify their mistakes. In one respect He is admitted on all hands to have introduced into His teaching and His practice an idea entirely foreign to the Jewish mind<sup>1</sup>—I mean, the equality of all men in the sight of God, and the admissibility of Gentiles to the spiritual privileges of Israel. We know how reluctantly St Peter and the other apostles accepted this new idea. Such reluctance stands in marked contrast to the unhesitating, easy way in which they grasped the idea, and believed and taught the fact of the Incarnation; prepared to sacrifice life itself sooner than abandon such belief. If there was something entirely foreign to the minds of these Jews in the idea of an incarnation, and if such an idea never entered the mind of

<sup>1</sup> It will be observed that I have used the word '*idea*' in the loose and unphilosophical sense in which it is

constantly employed in the *Vie de Jésus*.

their Master, or escaped His lips, what account is to be given of the belief so soon unanimously held and proclaimed by those who had been His companions and the depositaries of His instructions? Wondrous, indeed, must have been the impression made by the life and character of Jesus to produce such a result. If Renan is right, this belief in the Godhead of Jesus, novel in idea and unwarranted in its application, sprang up in hearts unprepared to receive it, solely as the consequence of familiarity with our Blessed Lord. Thus, unconsciously, does a writer who impugns St John's veracity confirm the Apostle's statement, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

But it is not enough to shew the inconsistency of modern idealism. We seek to establish a positive truth, a truth deliberately denied in the second of the two propositions already quoted. It is said that there is no trace in the first three Gospels of any claim or consciousness of Godhead on the part of Jesus of Nazareth. Now it may be observed in the first place, that we have no grounds, *à priori*, for expecting that an incarnation of the Deity must always be accompanied by an explicit self-declaration. The claims of Jesus to a Divine nature would not necessarily be invalidated, even if it could be shewn that He did not Himself urge them at all on His followers or on the world. I can no more predict the mode in which God will make a revelation to

man than I can anticipate the nature or the objects of such a revelation. It must be admitted that the Synoptists do not assert the Godhead of Jesus with the same distinctness as does St John. But it cannot be admitted that they deny it or discourage a belief in it. I may not be able to explain why they are less explicit on this great question than St John, but I shall endeavour to shew that the doctrine is not only implied in, but clearly deducible from the Synoptic narratives. Let it be borne in mind that in preceding Lectures the attempt has been made to establish the perfect sinlessness of Jesus from the consideration of these documents; and that we have already a strong presumption in favour of His being more than a sinless man, of His possessing a higher, a Divine nature, in union with His perfect humanity. Starting from this point, we proceed to examine the record of our Lord's own discourses; portions of which, at least in substance, (for we can afford to be very liberal in our concessions,) have been preserved to us by the first three Evangelists.

Now in these discourses, whether didactic or prophetic, there is one feature so strongly marked that no honest critic or expositor can ignore it. I refer to the tone of independence, the air of authority with which He ever spake. To this independence there is nothing analogous in the most fearless utterance of an Elijah, a Malachi, or a John Baptist, a Peter, or a Paul. These servants of the Most High ever ac-

knowledged their legation. The Old Testament prophets spoke in the name of Jehovah. They introduced their message by the words "Thus saith the Lord." Jesus never did this. With Him it was "Verily I say unto you." Compare His language with that of the old prophets. When He corrects a wrong conception of the meaning of the Decalogue you will observe that He puts His own interpretation and expansion of it on a par with the original law. "You have heard that it was said," *i.e.* by God to the ancients, your forefathers, "'Thou shalt not kill,' but I say unto you," an angry thought is murder in the sight of God. Mark the parallelism. As He quotes the words of the Decalogue, it is as though He had said, "God said to your fathers, 'Thou shalt not do this.' I say unto you 'Thou shalt not purpose this.'" If we compare with this language of our Lord the terms in which Isaiah comments upon another command of the Decalogue, the original Sabbath law, we must be struck by the difference of tone as well as expression between the son of Amoz and the Son of Man. "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," this is Isaiah's warrant; "I say unto you," at once the claim and the credentials of Jesus.

And what is true of our Lord's moral teaching, is equally true of what may be termed His theology. He told men more of the Divine character and attributes and of man's destiny than any prophet had revealed before. But these truths were not specially

made known to Him by vision, or by audible utterance from Heaven. He does not come forth like other teachers to deliver a specific message, to speak the words which God at some time put into His mouth, and no others. During His whole ministry, in solitude and in public, in the circle of His own disciples or before an unbelieving multitude, He is in this respect the same. He not only makes a revelation; His every utterance, His whole life, He himself is a revelation.

Most of what has been said of our Lord's teaching applies equally to His prediction of future events. Of these the most striking was His prophecy of the downfall of Jerusalem before the conquering arms of the Roman general, and its long subsequent desolation. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." A French philosopher, starting with the assumption that prophecy is impossible, might try to persuade us that our Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem was written after its overthrow by Titus<sup>1</sup>. But he cannot so tamper with the whole prophecy. Jerusalem has been for eighteen hundred years trodden down of the Gentiles. The zeal of Crusaders and the deathless patriotism of Jews, the efforts of Christian monarchs and the enterprise of private individuals—all have failed to arrest that terrible doom, have

<sup>1</sup> Renan tells us that "the speech to the women of Jerusalem (Luke xxiii. 28, 29) could scarcely have been

conceived except after the siege of the year 70."—*Introd.* p. 24, note.

failed, because the times of the Gentiles, *καιροὶ ἔθνων*, their opportunities of embracing the Gospel, have not yet run out. I do not refer to this prophecy as proving the Godhead, or as tending to establish the Divine Mission of Jesus, but only as illustrating that feature of His teaching which I have noticed, that from His lips truth flowed spontaneously as from its source. He speaks not as a commissioned man, but as a present God.

Compare again the terms in which our Lord is said to have addressed the corpse at the gate of Nain with the language of Elijah when he raised another widow's son. Jesus does not pray that the soul of the dead man may return to the lifeless body. He touches the bier and says, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." "And he that was dead sat up and began to speak." I might go through our Lord's miracles, and shew that while He never acknowledged that the power He exercised was delegated *pro hac vice*—while with authority He commanded unclean spirits to depart and diseases to succumb—He often employed language in connection with His mighty works which plainly asserted His Deity. Conscious—may we not, *must we not say?*—of His own Divine nature, He seems at times to speak as if God were there or nowhere; as if in Himself dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—as if (in one word) He was either an atheistic man in a godless world, or an Incarnate God. If there is an exception to this

general rule, it is to be found in the account of the raising of Lazarus given by St John. There our Lord is said before working the miracle to have acknowledged that the power He exercised was granted in answer to prayer. But they who refuse to believe St John will of course reject the whole passage; and they who believe the fourth Gospel will not need to be convinced that Jesus is very God.

And this suggests a remark which in these days is especially necessary. Many persons, finding in the New Testament expressions which seem to imply some kind of inferiority on the part of Jesus to His Heavenly Father, have overlooked the truth that such inferiority (if indeed such a term is admissible) is not of nature or substance, but of office and relation. That for which I contend is that Jesus is God—verily and indeed.

If this He be, He is, in respect of His Godhead, placed as far above the men He came to save, as the Infinite is above the finite, the Creative First Cause above the creation of His hands. If this He be, then however He may have emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation out of love to the race whose nature He deigned to assume, however He is inferior to the Father as touching His manhood, yet is He equal evermore and one with the Father as touching His Godhead.

I dwell on this distinction because through in-



attention to it some even within the pale of the Church, and the whole body of Unitarians, have denied that there is Scripture warrant for addressing prayer to Jesus. Is such prayer any where forbidden or discouraged? I fearlessly answer, 'NOWHERE.' As God, He is entitled to our worship, and though He took upon Him our nature that He might bring us to the Father, yet He does not refuse our adoration or spurn us from His feet. He has told us that the man who honours not the Son, honours not the Father who sent Him; and we would fain anticipate the time when all creation shall bow the knee at the sacred Name of Jesus, and when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, not to the dishonour, but to the glory of God the Father.

But further, the neglect of the distinction of which I have spoken might lead us to draw erroneous conclusions from passages which, if rightly understood, confirm the great doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus. Two of these passages I will quote, one from St Matthew, found also in St Luke, the other from St Matthew only. In the first we are told that Jesus said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him<sup>1</sup>." Where can a parallel to such language be found? That it is correctly reported I should infer

<sup>1</sup> M. tt. xi. 27.

(even if I did not believe in the inspiration of the New Testament), both from its being contained in two Gospels and from the context with which it stands connected in that of St Matthew. It introduces those 'comfortable words' of our Saviour Christ, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." To this well sustained claim of Omnipotence that offer of rest owes all its sweetness and its preciousness. I cannot think that St Matthew, who has recorded that wondrous offer, has forged the claim on which it rests. And if Jesus really spoke those words, "All things are delivered to me of my Father,"—If! alas that in this place such a proposition should be hypothetical. But assuming the genuineness of the passage, we must observe the terms in which it is couched. They are very similar to those of the other passage already referred to. In the verse before us Jesus says, "All things are delivered to me of my Father," in the other, "All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth." We have seen the superstructure of comfort which is based on the former. On the latter rests, shall I say, a nobler edifice? I must take heed what I say. But Jesus said, "Go ye *therefore*, and make disciples of all nations." It is as if He had placed His own Omnipotence in the hands of His Apostles, as constituting their commission, their warrant, their encouragement, their strength. And the rest of that closing passage of St Matthew

bears as clearly on the question before us as the verse I have quoted. Before, however, noticing the Baptismal formula contained in it, and the promise of our Lord's continued presence with His Church to the end of the world, with which the Gospel concludes, I would direct your attention to the terms in which our Lord's claim to Omnipotence is couched in the two verses I have quoted. He does not say, as He might have said, and as, methinks, an impostor claiming omnipotence would have said, "I possess all power and all knowledge; I am lord and owner of all things." We do not read of any religious teacher who claimed as much as Jesus did, but I think that any other would not have claimed so much without claiming more. There is something striking, something convincing in this *moderation*, shall we term it? of our Blessed Lord. It agrees perfectly with the hypothesis that He possessed a nature capable of wielding unlimited power and universal dominion, united to a human nature and clothed in human form. It consists, further, with the doctrine taught by the first followers of Jesus, that while there is a subordination of office or relation, there is no inferiority of nature separating Him as the Son of God from His heavenly Father. It is alleged with the confidence beneath which so often lurks a sophism, that while Jesus is called in the Scriptures the Son of God, He is not spoken of by any writer of the New Testament as God the

Son. The question is not one of terms or of nomenclature. Men who do not scruple to apply to Jesus the designation of a 'Galilean peasant'—a phrase not employed by any of the Evangelists—ought not to take exception to a title which, if not originated, is at least supported by the writers of the New Testament. The real question to be decided by each one of us is, not whether Jesus of Nazareth is, what every true servant of God is, a son of God, but whether He is very and eternal God, and as such demands our worship and obedience and trust.

To the arguments already adduced, in support of the catholic doctrine of the perfect Godhead of Jesus, I will only add two drawn from the Synoptic Gospels. St Matthew, after reciting the claim of Jesus to Omnipotence, and the commission to His apostles thereon founded, to go and teach all nations, informs us of the institution of the rite of baptism, the rite by which converts were to be admitted into the outward Church. They were to be baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We know that this same form of words is employed at the present day whenever Christian baptism is administered, and we can trace its use backwards to the early part of the 2nd century, when it would seem, from the language of Justin Martyr, to have been already established and habitual. Justin's words are these: he tells us that the candidates for baptism in his day bathed in the

water, "in the name of God the Father and Lord of the Universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost<sup>1</sup>." Can we believe that One so pious, so humble, so truthful as Jesus of Nazareth, would have coupled Himself with the Father in this formula of admission to the society He established, had He thought it robbery to be equal with God? How are we to account for this formula being retained in the purest and noblest and most exalted civilization the world has ever witnessed, rising buoyant above the waves of pagan persecution and philosophical contempt, and floating down the stream of eighteen centuries, like the Indian lamp on the breast of the Ganges, its flame erect, its brilliancy undimmed? How are we to account for this same form of words maintaining its place among us still in this 19th century—the welcome at once and the consecration of infant princes and peasant babes in England, and of the children of Africa and the East, when by the preaching of the Gospel they become obedient to the faith? I can only account for it in one way: because it embodies a truth which, like God its author, cannot die. And because that truth is no mere abstract, but one which nearly concerns mankind, one which fills a great blank in man's spiritual being, gives his life a meaning and his acts an aim, therefore the Lord of life and the Lord of

<sup>1</sup> ἐπ' ὀνόματος τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων  
καὶ δεσπότητος Θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος  
ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Πνεύματος

Ἁγίου τὸ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι τότε λουτρὸν ποι-  
οῦνται. *Απολ.* I. c. 61.

truth, the Author of man's being and Giver of all good, has enshrined the deathless truth in a formula of His own choosing. Translated into every language, uttered in every land, it is inscribed on the portals of that spiritual temple which is the Church of the living God.

The concluding verse of St Matthew's Gospel might seem to a careless or prejudiced reader to contain little more than a general provision for the development of that society of which all admit Jesus to have been in some sense the Founder. And yet the language of that verse ought not to be thus summarily dealt with. From its agreement and coherence with what precedes, and from its fulfilment in the subsequent history of the Church, we must, on all principles of fair criticism, admit its genuineness. And if so, it would seem that the commission given by Jesus to His disciples was, that they should teach their converts to observe all that He had commanded, and further, that He promised to be with them always, all the days<sup>1</sup>, till the end of the dispensation. If He who uttered that command and that promise was not God, He was guilty of such presumption as must dethrone Him from His place in the respect and admiration of His followers. And if He was not God, then the fulfilment of such a command and the accomplishment of such a promise are historic phenomena, of which no solution has yet been at-

<sup>1</sup> *πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας.* Matt. xxviii. 20.

tempted. If we would see how the command has been obeyed and the promise fulfilled, we need not to study the records of the past. The proofs are around us, and in the midst of us—in the populous parishes of our native land and in missionary stations beyond the sea. Wherever Christ's law of love has been proclaimed, and His work of love made known, and His Gospel of love preached, there men have subjected their wills to His will, and have worshipped Him, not only as God, but God Incarnate, as that which He promised to be to the end of the dispensation, Emmanuel—God with us.

But we cannot within the limits prescribed pursue the argument further<sup>1</sup>. I have tried to adapt my treatment of this great question to the mode of thought which prevails amongst educated men in the present day. Conceding (for argument's sake) all that even the most exacting could demand, I have endeavoured to shew that an honest study of the first three Gospels in their broadest features might lead us to that conclusion in which the majority of Christians have acquiesced, and for which they have contended, that Jesus is very and Eternal God. If it be asked, why this doctrine is not more explicitly

<sup>1</sup> Two prominent events of our Lord's history, His temptation and His resurrection (which have been passed over without special discussion), point, when read aright, to the same conclusion as those incidents we have already considered. They are, after

all, but signal instances of the truth which we have endeavoured to trace—differing from other marked events as one star differeth from another star in glory, but obeying the same law and proclaiming the same Deity.

stated in the first three Gospels, we should at once answer the question by another. Why are diamonds hidden in the mines of Golconda and gold in the heart of the Brazilian hills, instead of lying in starry heaps on the sea-shore, or in ingots paving the highway of the world's traffick? Why must human toil and skill and patience be so lavishly expended before man can bring food out of the earth, wine to make glad his heart, and oil to cause his face to shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart? I see enough of man's present condition to be convinced that he is here in a state of probation, and that God has in love and mercy ordained that no great treasure, no necessary good, physical or intellectual, shall be his, without exertion on his part to obtain it. And if this law extends to the spiritual world, it confirms my belief in God as a supreme and absolute ruler in all places of His dominions. He who has not written on the sun's disc, in so many words, as the atheist might require, "There is a God," has not written on the page of the Synoptists, "Jesus of Nazareth is God." Condescending to make Himself known to His creatures in the book of creation, or the book of Inspired Record, He would not *force* His revelation on man, and so abolish faith, and leave no scope for honest investigation, and reduce man from a moral agent to a mere machine of flesh and blood. As the heavens so declare the glory of God that those who behold it not close their eyes against



the light, so verily they who see not the Eternal power and Godhead of Jesus in the Inspired Records of His life and in the phenomena of His spiritual kingdom, are equally without excuse<sup>1</sup>.

Starting from the familiar point of our Lord's human life, we have arrived at the assertion of His proper Deity. Had we, in accordance with the method of a past age, tested the doctrine by the writings of the New Testament indiscriminately, especially those of St John and St Paul, we should have arrived at the same result. But there is yet another line of argument by which we may approach, if we cannot reach this result. In the adaptation of the doctrine in question to the present constitution of man and to the supply of his deepest wants, there is a confirmation of its truth, so much the stronger, as lying outside the record to which we have hitherto exclusively appealed.

Sin and Death! Words how familiar, yet how full of terrible meaning! Sin, which was born in us and has grown up with us, twining ever around our hearts, poisoning the fountain of our actions, corrupting our affections, dimming our mental vision, and alienating us from the source of Good. How shall we get rid of it? Guilt, the dark shadow which sin throws on the conscience, guilt, the ruthless avenger with its two attendants, remorse behind and fear be-

<sup>1</sup> "*Scripture and Unitarianism* appear to any thinking person so utterly irreconcilable, that he cannot adhere to both."—Abp. Whately, *Remains*, p. 259.

fore, who shall rescue us from its grasp? Death, the certain, yet uncertain heritage of one who knows that death cannot quench his immortality, that it is but a curtain hiding a life beyond the grave. Who shall spoil death of his terror, and tell me something certain of the land that lies beyond? These questions men have asked in every age, not always in words, sometimes in groans of agony, sometimes in shrieks of fear. They are questions to which but one satisfactory answer has been given. And that answer for its truth and its power depends entirely on the doctrine of the Godhead of Jesus. If He who came to save us from sin, to purchase forgiveness, to bestow eternal life, is not God, then He is not, He cannot be mighty, almighty to save. If He is less than infinite, that is less than God, what sure confidence can any sinner place in His mercy or His promise? I know enough of my own sin to know that no ordinary love can save me, no common, no human blood redeem me. But there are depths of guilt below, far below all which my self-examination has fathomed; there are mountains of transgressions rising above me which my mental eye dimmed by self-love can never grasp, and I want to be saved to the uttermost, every sin fully atoned for, all unrighteousness perfectly and for ever covered. Nor can I rest satisfied with an atonement which shall not include all who need it. If He who gave Himself a ransom for many is a finite Being, however great His merits,

I have no assurance that they will embrace every sinner who comes to God by Him. And if so, I may be excluded; if the ark is not large enough to contain all who seek admission, you may be shut out, you or those nearest and dearest to you, the loved one whom you laid in the grave in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. By His resurrection He was declared to be the Son of God; death hath no more dominion over Him. He is alive for evermore, alive to make intercession for His redeemed, and able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

The doctrine which we have been discussing is one on which I would once more beseech you, my younger brethren, to make up your minds without delay. There are indications around us and in the midst of us of indifference, of hostility to the claims of Jesus to be God and Lord. Beware of such indifference. It is more dangerous than open infidelity, while equally fatal, because it is less shocking, less revolting. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus which He spake, "He that is not with me is against me." Think not to occupy a border-land between Unitarianism and Christianity. If Jesus is God, worship Him; and if not, what shall we say? do despite to reason, and disbelieve testimony, and abandon the faith of your childhood, and brand all Christendom as idolatrous; but do not betray the

Son of Man with a kiss. Do not try by misty language or metaphysical reasonings to bridge over the great eternal gulf which is fixed between the truth of God and the devil's lie. Do not become ministers of a Church whose Creeds you must subscribe in a 'non-natural sense,' and whose Liturgy you vilify or misrepresent. In an hour when the love of many has waxed cold, and the faith of many has been perverted, this Church and realm of England look to you, my younger brethren, look to you with anxious prayerful expectation, to see whether you will be true to England's God. And from many a home in this land I well know that a mother's prayer has gone up to Him whose ear is ever open, and whose grace is omnipotent, praying that you may be enabled to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

And, even as I speak, a voice comes, addressed to every heart. It comes from Him, who, once crucified for us in weakness, now sits in glory at God's right hand. And as He sees some who bear His name false to Him, and some denying Him, and some doubtful in their allegiance, He asks in those accents which His sheep know well, "Will *ye also* go away?" God grant that this may be the honest answer of each and all of us, "Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

SERMONS, &c.



## SERMON I.

### *THE LAMB OF GOD.*

(Preached on Good Friday, 1866.)

#### JOHN I. 29.

*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith,  
Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of  
the world.*

THERE are few passages of Holy Scripture with which we are more familiar than this—few titles of our Divine Lord which we employ more frequently or more readily than that by which the Baptist here designates Him. Conscious of sin, of want, of misery, Christian hearts have for eighteen centuries put up the prayer, “O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, Grant us thy peace; Have mercy upon us.” They have felt the need of some sacrifice wherewith to come before the Lord, and they have believed that Jesus Christ is the Lamb which God Himself has provided. They have longed for deliverance from guilt, and they have found comfort in the assurance that Jesus saves His people from their sins. Such has been, such is, the faith

of the Church; such the lesson which her ministers have drawn from the testimony borne to our Lord by His forerunner John the Baptist. And yet, simple as are the words themselves, evident as the allusions appear to most minds, certain as is the doctrine to be drawn from them—this passage is described by an eminent modern commentator as “one of the most important and difficult sayings in the New Testament.” Its importance all must admit. Its bearing on the fact which we specially commemorate to-day few Christians will deny. Its supposed difficulty need not deter us from considering it at a time when with tearful eyes the Church is gazing on the dying agony of her Lord, and pious hearts are mourning for the sins which crucified Him. God forbid that we should at such a time substitute the discussion of a hard text for the attempt to bring home to every heart the lesson of the Cross! Cold textual criticism and theological controversy must this day at least give place to devout meditation and thoughts of charity. And if in our consideration of the passage which I have chosen as my text we find ourselves face to face with false teaching, if in the effort to throw light upon the truth we expose the antagonist error, let the light which we employ be that which beams from the bleeding brow of the Crucified, not the cold light of scholarship or polemic orthodoxy; not the chill sickly rays of an indifferent liberality, but the



living fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifice on the altar of Calvary. In the presence of that display of infinite love we may well obey the Apostle's injunction, "Let all your things be done with charity<sup>1</sup>."

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God." Though different explanations have been suggested of the phrase here employed, "the Lamb of God," no doubt has been, or could reasonably be, entertained of its application to the Lord Jesus. Our Blessed Lord after His baptism had, under the leading of the Holy Ghost, sought the retirement of the desert. There in solitude He had fasted and prayed, and had been tempted of the devil. There He had grappled single-handed with the evil one, and had defeated His foe. And now the meek Conqueror was returning from that wondrous battle-field. He rides in no triumphal car. No victor's wreath is on His brow. No angel legions follow in His train. No mighty Capitol welcomes His approach. He walks alone across the desert sands to His Galilæan home, there to carry on that great redemptive work which had been so auspiciously begun. But on His way He has to cross that valley of the Jordan which was the scene of John's preaching and of His own baptism. It may be (as Theophylact suggests) that our Lord sought His herald for the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 14.

express purpose of drawing from him this noble testimony—in order that, having in His baptism fulfilled as man the law which is binding on men, He might now be declared to be more than man, needing not like others the baptism of repentance; having not like others to make confession of sin, but Himself bearing and removing the sin of the world. He comes to John, and He finds him surrounded by a crowd of his countrymen. Not only had Jerusalem and all Judæa and all the region round about Jordan gone out to John, to be baptized and to confess their sins, but the Jews had sent a special deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask the prophet who he was. These priests and Levites had come to him the day before that on which Jesus appeared. Owing to the distance they had to travel they would seem to have remained till the next day. At any rate, in the words which follow my text, John the Baptist is evidently addressing those whom he had addressed the day before. ‘This Lamb of God,’ said he, ‘is He of whom I told you yesterday; He of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ And I cannot but think that in this fact we have a clue to the meaning of the words ‘The Lamb of God.’ As addressed to Jewish priests and Levites they must have had a special, a definite significance. These men were by their very vocation familiarized with the sacrificial system of the Temple worship. They

were priests—not scribes—and they probably knew more of the Pentateuch than of the Prophets or the Hagiographa—more of the writings of Moses than of David or Isaiah. John had already told them that he was the herald of a greater than himself—and when Jesus appeared, he said, “This is He of whom I spake to you. This is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” I do not know whether we have ever formed an adequate conception of the prominence given to the rite of sacrifice in the daily life of the Jews. I believe that to a Jewish priest the lamb must have become the very symbol of sacrifice. Not only on the great annual festivals was a lamb the victim offered on behalf of the people, but the same animal was slain morning and evening, day after day, and year after year, and century after century, as an expiatory sacrifice; and there was a provision for a similar offering to be made on many other special occasions. Thus the very mention of “the lamb” must have suggested to him the idea of sacrifice; just as to us the crown or the sceptre is symbolical of royalty,—nay, just as with us the words ‘daily bread’ include all that is needful to support life. And when to this title of our Blessed Lord the further description is added, “which taketh away the sin of the world,” we can hardly doubt that, however the hearers may have limited the word ‘world’ to the Jewish nation, they must have understood John to refer to those sacri-

fices which were originally instituted as expiations for human sin.

We observe—alas! that it should be needful to lay stress on the remark—that the holy Baptist describes our Blessed Lord not as a lamb, *i.e.* one of God's lambs, but as THE Lamb of God. He did not cast about for a term which would have classed Jesus with, and on a level with, those He came to redeem. John had doubtless read the 23rd Psalm, and knew that God was *his* shepherd. For him, as for the Psalmist, God had prepared a table in the wilderness. For him, as for all God's flock, there was a sure provision and sure protection and sure guidance and sure comfort and sure victory. For him, as for all God's flock, there was that inward peace, which reliance on an Almighty Shepherd alone can inspire. And can we bring ourselves to believe that when John pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God," he only indicated One "whose confidence had never been disturbed, whose steadfast peace no agitation of life had ever ruffled"? Was he only doing "obeisance to the royalty of inward happiness"? Was he worshipping a state of mind which differed from his own and from that of all God's servants only in degree, but not in kind? Was he so imbued with the imagery of the 23rd Psalm as altogether to forget Exodus and Numbers and the 53rd chapter of Isaiah? Strange, if it were so, that he should have employed

<sup>1</sup> *Ecc Homo*, pp. 6, 7.

a word which can hardly be said to embody that imagery, and which must have suggested (as we have seen) a very different image to his hearers. Stranger still, that he should have confirmed the suggestion, and led away his hearers further from the image which possessed his own mind, by adding those remarkable words, "which taketh away the sin of the world."

But admitting, as on every sound principle of interpretation we must admit, that the Baptist's words had reference to the sacrificial lamb of the Mosaic ritual, we are met by the objection, that according to that ritual the lamb was not used as a sin-offering properly so called and known. If such was not the character of the type, how can it be so expressly affirmed of the antitype? If the Paschal lamb was not expiatory, and the morning and evening sacrifice was not a sin-offering, how could they prefigure Him whose office it is to take away the sin of the world? I cannot but think, that they who see no connexion between the Paschal rite and expiation or atonement, overlook or allow scant weight to the fact, that the Passover was instituted to commemorate a great temporal deliverance, of which the Redemption of the world by the death of Christ is the spiritual counterpart. The prominent, the essential features of the Passover ceremony, those which characterised it no less in the time of Solomon than at its first institution, those which remained unchanged when much else was altered or modified, were these—the

slaying of the lamb and the sprinkling of its blood. This greatest of Jewish feasts seems to combine and include within itself every form of offering, at once propitiatory and eucharistic. And as the Israelites kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them<sup>1</sup>, so Christ our passover is sacrificed for us<sup>2</sup>; Christ, whose blood is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, speaking better things than the blood of Abel's sacrifice or the Jewish Paschal lamb.

And it may be further remarked that the expression, the *Lamb of God*, seems almost to limit the reference to the Paschal lamb. In two passages of the book of Exodus, God speaks of this victim as peculiarly His own. He terms it "my sacrifice<sup>3</sup>." It was in an especial sense the lamb of God, not in the highest and fullest sense, but so as to distinguish it from all other victims, and to render it specially typical of the coming Redeemer. It was during the Passover festival that our Lord was crucified, that His blood was shed. Nor can we call it a mere coincidence, that when the soldiers had broken the legs of the two robbers who were crucified with Him, they came to Jesus, and finding that He was dead already they brake not His legs. St John<sup>4</sup> tells us that this was done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "A bone of him shall not be broken." The Scripture referred to is Exod. xii. 46, where it is

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 28.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.    <sup>3</sup> Exod. xxiii. 18=xxxiv. 25,    <sup>4</sup> John xix. 36.

commanded, "Thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house, neither shall ye break a bone thereof." This was part of the original institution, and therefore an essential part of the rite. The injunction was repeated (Num. ix. 12) two years later, when the tabernacle was fully set up and furnished, and its ritual fully established (Num. vii. 1). From this passage we may gather that the evangelist St John regarded our Blessed Lord in His crucifixion and death as the true Paschal victim, God's own sacrifice, the true lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. But in the expression "the Lamb of God," there is doubtless included still more than a reference to that victim which was specially designated the sacrifice of Jehovah. Christ is the lamb of God because He was destined by God, provided by God, accepted by God, as a propitiation for human sin. In the book of the Revelation<sup>1</sup>, Christ is spoken of as "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." St Peter reminds his brethren that they had been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world and in these latter days manifested. In the purpose of God (as we are wont to say) this sacrifice was designed long before the creation of the world, in the far off fathomless depths of an eternity stretching back for ever in the rear of time. The death of

<sup>1</sup> c. xiii. 8: comp. 1 Pet. i. 12, 20.

Christ was not an afterthought of the Divine economy, it was part of a great scheme of infinite wisdom and goodness. It is the eternal purpose of One with whom there is no past, or future ; One not limited by the same conditions as His creatures, with whom purpose and act are one, for whom "all is one and at once<sup>1</sup>." And as Christ was thus the designed and provided Lamb of God, so also was He accepted of God as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sin of the world. This truth was prefigured not only by the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, but by pre-Mosaic history and by post-Mosaic prophecy. The animals whose skins were employed by God Himself to clothe our first parents after the fall must have been slain, slain by Divine appointment, or, it may be, in a miraculous manner. And viewing this fact in the light of subsequent revelation, we see in it the first institution of sacrifice, the first germ of the doctrine of expiation. And when on the road to mount Moriah the father of the faithful told his son that God would provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering<sup>2</sup>, we cannot doubt the reference. And though Abraham may not have clearly understood all that his own words implied, or all that we understand them to mean, yet we know that He rejoiced to see the day of Christ, that he saw it and was glad<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> John viii. 56.



Passing over the Divinely appointed sacrifices of the law, of which we have already spoken, we come to the prophecy of Isaiah, and specially to the great Messianic chapter, the 53rd. In this chapter a suffering Messiah is clearly predicted; but the prophet does not lay any stress on the symbolical meaning of the Jewish sacrifices. The allusion to those sacrifices is by no means clearly marked; for in the one verse where Christ is said to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, He is also compared to a sheep before its shearers. It is for this reason that I have forborne hitherto to refer the Baptist's words to the prophecy of Isaiah, that I have supposed him to allude primarily to the Paschal lamb when he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God." And yet when the Baptist tells us that Jesus is not only the Lamb of God but the sin-bearer too, when he speaks of Him as the author of a deliverance greater than that from Egypt, and tells us how that deliverance was accomplished, then we are led to exclaim, "This is He of whom not only Moses in the law, but of whom the prophets did write." And as every Scripture is inspired by one and the self-same Spirit, so He of whom those Scriptures testify is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

"He taketh away the sin of the world." What is the meaning of that wonderful statement? In what does the removal of sin consist? And how is it accomplished? The word which is rendered "taketh away" is used elsewhere in two distinct senses. Some-

times it means, to carry, and so, to endure, to bear. At other times it has the sense of removing, or taking away. In the text both senses are combined. Christ bears the world's sin; and He takes it away or expiates it. In that solemn act of the Jewish ritual, in which the hand of the worshipper was laid on the head of the victim before it was slain, there was a typical transference of guilt from the sinner to the sacrifice; and then death, the penalty of sin, was inflicted on the sin-bearer. Thus the obedient Israelite was taught to believe that a transference of guilt was not only possible, but that it was an ordinance of Jehovah. Nor can I think that any man who rightly estimates the burden of sin, who rightly regards Christ as bearing the nature of man, can hesitate to admit that to save man He bore the burden of human guilt. Theoretically, I know, men cavil at the notion of a transference of guilt. But such cavils are not the utterance of the heart. What is the language of the conscience-stricken sinner? 'I have sinned, I have incurred guilt. A sin committed like a word spoken cannot be recalled. I have offended God, I have polluted myself. Christ may shew me how to suffer. He might even suffer for me. But He cannot bear my sin. I must bear it myself. It clings to me like the poisoned robe of Nessus. It eats into my very vitals. And unless I can get rid of it, I am undone for ever.' To such an one the Gospel says, Christ bears the sin of the world. His blood sprin-

kled on the conscience cleanses it from its defilements. All the types of the law, all the teaching of the prophets, all the doctrine of the Apostles, nay, the self-proclamation of Jesus Christ Himself, diverse in time, in manner of utterance though they be, all unite in one glorious testimony to the everlasting truth—the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. As the Israelite—look at the passage, Leviticus iv. 27, 28—it is very touching—as the Israelite, I say, one of the common people, when he sinned through ignorance, doing somewhat against the commandments of the Lord, or when he sinned and knew that he was guilty, was commanded to bring an offering and lay his hand upon the victim's head, and the priest made an atonement for the sin he had committed and it was forgiven him, even so it is now. The sin of every penitent believing sinner is laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. The guilt is transferred, the penalty has been undergone, an atonement has been made, the sin is forgiven.

But more than this. It is sadly strange how unwilling sinners are to accept the salvation which our Blessed Lord has purchased. Some have told us that Christ as the Lamb of God bore the sin of the world only by enduring the wickedness of men, the contradiction of sinners against Himself. This He did, but this many of His servants have done too. Paul and Polycarp and Luther and Latimer did this, but none said of them that they took away the sin of the

world. They were martyrs and confessors. No one of them was called, or was, the Lamb of God.

And shall we say that the declaration of the Baptist was fulfilled in the moral effects which have followed the proclamation of the Gospel? Can we affirm that Christ's religion takes away, however it may lessen, the sin of the world? As regards one form of evil at least, that which displays itself in violence, we know that Christ Himself said, I came not to send peace on earth but a sword. Society, that is, the world, is but an aggregate of individuals; and as in this present dispensation there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not, so even in Christian lands it cannot be said that sin in this sense is taken away. And in reference to the moral results of Christianity generally, we know that one, and not the weakest argument of the unbeliever in every age has been drawn from the apparent results which have attended the proclamation of the Gospel. I think that if this had been the Baptist's meaning, he would have described our Blessed Lord not as one who takes, but who *will* take away the sin of the world.

Yet the question remains, How is sin taken away, not sins (though we are wont and rightly so to adapt to prayer the Baptist's words), but sin? The word will include not only each sinful act, but that fault and corruption of our nature which is termed original or birth-sin. The sin, the guilt, of the world is laid upon Christ. And what more shall we say?

We have been told that He, as the representative man, though sinless, suffered as a sinner, that He performed the greatest moral act ever done in the world; and we are left to imitate Him if we can, and to draw what comfort we can from the spectacle of His Passion thus interpreted. "Ecce homo!" was the careless, the contemptuous exclamation of Pilate. 'Behold the *fellow*'—is perhaps a fairer translation of his words<sup>1</sup>. He who so spoke of our Divine Redeemer was one who had asked, as some ask now, 'What is truth?' and who, though he had scourged Jesus and allowed Him to be crowned with thorns and buffeted, twice declared that he found no fault in Him. Pilate, the very type of the natural man, the man who lives in a world of sense, and counts as realities only what he sees and hears, counted Jesus as a man—a slave, but faultless nevertheless.

If our Blessed Lord was only a faultless sinless man, free from actual and from original sin, Himself He might save, but we have no surety that He could save others. He might have endured the persecution of sinners, He might have set an example of holiness, He might have been the prophet of God, the servant of God, the saint of God; but He could not have claimed to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. No! my brethren. He of whom John witnessed thus must be very and eternal God. Thus only does He accomplish the prophecies which

<sup>1</sup> Classical scholars are familiar with this use of ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

went before and the types of the older dispensation. And thus only can He justify the language of apostles and evangelists concerning Him, or satisfy the deepest want of the human heart. If the Old Testament foretells (as it certainly does) a suffering Messiah, it foretells Him no less certainly as a Divine person. The child born, the son given, is the mighty God, the everlasting Father. It is against the Shepherd, the companion of the Lord of Hosts, that the sword is commanded to awake<sup>1</sup>. They shall look upon Me (Jehovah is the speaker), upon Me whom they have pierced<sup>2</sup>. Such quotations might be multiplied were it necessary. While the New Testament is so full of the Godhead of Him who died upon the cross, that it is strange that any one who believes the book should doubt the doctrine.

My younger Christian brethren, satisfy yourselves without delay as to the nature of Him whom the Baptist called the Lamb of God. You are living in days when men can tacitly deny the Godhead of the world's Redeemer, and yet pass for good Christian men. You are living in days when the press pours forth floods of literature, attractive in style, charitable in spirit, religious in tone, but the tendency of which is to make love to man the fulfilment of the law, and to eliminate the superhuman both from Scripture and from life. It is the fashion to publish professed biographies of Jesus Christ in which the

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xiii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. xii. 10. John xix. 37.

human only is portrayed and the Divine ignored. Perverse ingenuity and misplaced labour are employed in unravelling the web of the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospel, in drawing out and casting aside the golden warp of his proper Deity, and so destroying the matchless, the perfect fabric. A history of the *man* Christ Jesus as distinguished from the Divine Word ought to have no attractiveness to a Christian man. It is not such a Saviour that the Church has known and worshiped ever since the time when that small persecuted band met at daybreak to sing hymns to Christ as God. Since then the ceaseless song has gone up: "Thou art the king of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." Such a history is the history of an idea, a life of one who never lived. It is fiction and worse than fiction, because it misrepresents Him who in His cradle and on His cross was as really the mighty God as He is now in His celestial glory the Lamb that was slain. Thus to describe Him is to strip Him of the crown of Deity, and leave Him only the crown of thorns. In the temptations and the sorrows of life, happy is he who keeps firm hold of this cardinal truth. He who in the days of His flesh suffered being tempted is able, because omnipotent, to succour as well as to sympathise with His tempted people. And when the remembrance of sin—sin black, repeated, aggravated—rushes with torrent force over the soul, when guilt becomes a reality, and is felt to be more than a breach

of charity—an offence against God, a violation of His law, and an insult to His love, happy he who can lay fast hold on the truth, that the eternal Judge is the merciful Saviour too, that the Author of the law is the victim of the Gospel, the Lamb of God, God of God, whose blood *therefore* cleanseth us from all sin.

Here, Christian brethren, we have the true *εἰρημικόν*. This truth it is which gives peace upon earth, peace in the heart, peace in the world. The Baptist, raised by Divine inspiration above Jewish prejudices, had before told his countrymen that God was able of the stones of the desert to raise up children unto Abraham; and he now proclaimed Jesus as the Saviour not of the Jew alone, but of the world. He is (said the other John) the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And in this He was typified by the Paschal Lamb; for we read that when Israel had been delivered out of the house of bondage, there went up with them out of Egypt a mixed multitude for whose participation in the Passover a special provision was made. Thus at the very institution of that festival there was a foreshadowing of the admission of the Gentiles to the Gospel feast. And by that mixed multitude who went up out of Egypt with Israel, are we not reminded of that glorious and blessed consummation, when that great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and people



and tongues shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb"?

Of that multitude it is said, "They have washed their robes, and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God.* They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes<sup>1</sup>." O beatific vision! O blessed reality! O wondrous grace, that offers to every penitent sinner perfect remission here, perfect bliss hereafter!

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 14—17.

## SERMON II.

### *THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.*

(Preached on Easter Day, 1866.)

PHILIPPIANS III. part of v. 10.

*The power of His resurrection.*

THE law of Christian life is a law of progress. This truth is set before us in Scripture both in figurative and in dogmatic language. Our life is described as a journey in which no loitering, no stopping, no turning back, is permitted: as a race in which every muscle and sinew must be strained till the goal be won. The life of the regenerate soul is compared to that of the animal and vegetable world, of which we know that development and expansion and growth are necessary conditions. St Peter, after reminding his converts that they had been made partakers of the Divine nature, bids them for this very reason add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge and every Christian grace. In the passage with which the words I have read as my text stand connected, St Paul declares his own willing subjection to, and compliance with, this universal law. Great as was his knowledge of the things of

God, strong as was his faith in Christ, ardent and constant as his love to Him, he still felt that he had not yet attained the object on which his heart was set, that he had not yet laid hold on spiritual perfection. He could already protest that to him to live was Christ, but he was not satisfied with that. He would add to his faith knowledge, the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, a knowledge infinitely more worthy of his efforts than any other attainment. "That I may *know* Him, and the power of His resurrection."

We cannot suppose St Paul to be here expressing a desire again to see Christ's risen body, to have the vision of that Just One repeated which he had beheld on the road to Damascus, and, it may be, on other subsequent occasions. St Paul could have no doubt of the fact that Christ was risen indeed. It was not the resurrection itself, but the power of that resurrection which he longed to know.

If we are right in supposing the Apostle to be here describing his own spiritual state as one of progress, he cannot refer in these words to the reception of a mere historical event, or an assent to the general truth of which that event was at once the proof and the illustration. He was not longing for certainty of the fact, of which he had now for some years been a witness, and for the assertion of which he had suffered the loss of all things. His want was not intellectual, but spiritual. He wanted not to be more certain, but to know more, to experience more, to feel more.

And yet if we would understand what St Paul meant by knowing the power of Christ's resurrection, we must begin by ascertaining his view of that resurrection in its objective reality.

And, first, we notice that before his conversion St Paul was prepared by his religious education to regard a resurrection from the dead as possible. In the time of our Lord and His Apostles, what we should call the religious world among the Jews was divided into two great parties—Pharisees and Sadducees. The latter, we are expressly told, denied the doctrine of spiritual existences and the resurrection of the body, while the Pharisees confessed both. St Paul was, as he tells us in this very chapter, a Pharisee. He therefore not only assented to the truth that God was able to raise the dead, but he had probably defended it, as an assailed position, with all the ardour of his energetic character. In attempting such a defence, he would naturally be led to consult the writings of Moses and the prophets. He would probably not detect the latent argument for a resurrection which our Blessed Lord drew from the title claimed by Jehovah, in Exodus iii., as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He might not have inferred that as God is not the God of the dead but of the living, the souls of the Patriarchs were in His hands in joy and felicity, awaiting the time when they should be restored once more to the fleshly tenements they had left. St Paul

may not have seen, as some Christians in later times have seen, in Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza a type of the Messiah bursting the gates of the grave. He may not have regarded Jonah as in this respect typical too. He may not have been taught by Gamaliel to interpret the rescue of Isaac from apparently imminent death, as we have been taught by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He may not have known that Abraham offered his son, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure. But I doubt not St Paul, like other men, had an instinctive consciousness that death was not the end of life; he had a longing for an outlet to the grave, and a conviction, call it fancy, call it superstition if you will, that such an outlet exists. And when with the cry of universal humanity on his lips, *non omnis moriar*, he opened the holy books in which he knew God had revealed to man the secrets of the supernatural world, there he found statement after statement, the very echo of his own heart's utterance; the voice of God without him confirming the voice of nature within, bidding him not long but look for life beyond the grave. Those words of the Patriarch Job which, written centuries before Paul was born, in these latter days lend comfort and encouragement to bereaved and mourning Christian hearts, words which critical ingenuity has striven hard to rob of their great meaning, but which rise victorious from

each attack, deathless as the life of which they testify—those words of the afflicted Patriarch were no doubt familiar to the Apostle, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” David too had spoken in the person of One who could say, “I have set the Lord always before me: He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall dwell in safety: for Thou wilt not leave my soul to the world unseen, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Beloved One to see the pit of destruction<sup>1</sup>.” Here surely was a prophecy that *one* at least of the sons of man—the Messiah it might be—the head and Redeemer of the race, that One should arise stronger than death and the grave, the victor not the victim of corruption. And the glimpse thus given was widened and confirmed by the language of the following Psalm, when the Psalmist seems no longer to speak in the person of Messiah, but in his own proper character as a trusting happy child of God, one whose heart was stayed on an unseen Almighty Protector, and whose present trouble was lightened by the sure hope of resurrection beatitude. “As for me,” sorrowful sinful exile though I am, “I shall behold Thy face in righteousness, and

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvi. 8—10.

when I awake up I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness'." The vision of Ezekiel recorded in the 37th chapter of his prophecy, whatever other lesson it may be intended to teach, must surely have confirmed the Jew who read it in the hope of a resurrection. We are so accustomed to put what we call a spiritual meaning on the words of Scripture, especially of the Old Testament prophecies, that we are in danger of losing sight of their first and obvious significance. But this is certain, the language is descriptive of a resurrection. That is the thought suggested, suggested it may be to a Jew far more vividly than to us; inasmuch as he had learnt to interpret literally the utterances of the holy Prophets. But there is one passage so explicit on this subject, that if it stood alone, it might well have inspired the pious Jew with the hope of a resurrection. In the prophecy of Daniel (xii. 2), it is predicted that a time of unexampled trouble shall come in which God's people shall be delivered, even every one that shall be found written in the book. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Brought up in the school of Gamaliel, taught not only the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, but the controversial expositions of the Pharisees, St Paul even before his conversion must have been prepared to accept the doctrine of a resur-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvii. 15.

rection of the body as divinely revealed. With him even at that stage of his life it was not thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead.

But at length Saul is converted : and the means—the outward objective means of his conversion—is a vision of the once crucified, but risen and ascended Christ. There is no reason to suppose that during our Lord's earthly ministry He had ever been seen by St Paul ; indeed, the Apostle's silence on this subject is eloquent and, I think, convincing. But when on his road to Damascus he was suddenly stopped, and (I will not say miraculously) but with a miracle converted, he then saw the Lord Jesus Christ. This he expressly tells us. Of this Ananias as expressly reminded him. That it was no mere optical illusion, no mental ecstasy, is clear from the language employed. St Paul saw Jesus alive, whom he knew to have been crucified, and we may say that if in any respect his evidence of the resurrection fell short of that of the other Apostles, it was more than supplemented by the additional proof which he had of the ascension of our Blessed Lord. We have thus advanced one step further. Not only did St Paul believe a resurrection of the dead possible and probable, but he had the testimony of his own senses to the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth, of whose crucifixion and death he must have heard as undoubted facts, was alive again. He knew the Lord Jesus. He knew



that Jesus died and rose and revived. And yet he was not satisfied. He longed still to know the power of His resurrection.

If we admit the two facts which the Church commemorates on Good Friday and Easter; if we believe that the Lord Jesus in our nature paid the penalty of sin, and really and truly died, so that by the force and violence of those torments which He felt His soul was actually separated from His body, and the body left without the least vitality<sup>1</sup>; if we further believe that the life He laid down on the cross He re-assumed in the grave, and having by His infinite power re-united the same soul which was separated at death to the same body which was buried, that He walked forth from His sepulchre the same Christ that He was before, and that He now is; if all this we steadfastly believe, (as every Christian must,) then we cannot but believe in some sense or other the *power* of that resurrection. Our Blessed Lord had claimed what no prophet had ever claimed—the power to lay down his life and to take it again. Others, as Elijah and Elisha, had been the instruments of bringing back the vital spark to the lamp of clay from which it had fled. But beside that couch of stone on which the Saviour's body lay, no prophet's form was seen, no prophet's voice heard calling upon God that the soul might return to it again. Elijah had ascended to

<sup>1</sup> See Ep. Pearson, *Exposition of the Creed*, Art. IV.

heaven ; but he had not died, he had not risen. Elisha had raised others ; but himself he could not raise. He only who is the Lord of all Creation and the Lord of Life, who in the greatness of His love had taken our nature and died for us on the cross, was able by His own Divine power to resume the life he had resigned. The fate of a kingdom has sometimes been decided on a small battle-field. The quarrel of two hostile nations has been settled by champions in single combat. In the narrow chamber of that rock-hewn sepulchre the greatest fight was fought, the noblest victory won. Life and Death closed in mortal struggle, and Death was vanquished. He who is the Life gave the death-blow to Death, He who is the Resurrection rose to die no more, Death hath no more dominion over Him.

As St Paul believed the fact of our Lord's resurrection, he must have recognized the power—the supernatural the Divine power—which was exerted and displayed in it. And he may have desired to have his belief strengthened and his conviction of the truth deepened. But even this was not all for which he longed and strove. From other passages of his writings it is clear that he regarded the resurrection of our Blessed Lord as exerting a powerful influence on himself and on the Church of Christ at large. And it was for an increased, an ever-increasing experience of this influence that he longed

and prayed. In his Epistle to the Ephesians<sup>1</sup> he asks on behalf of his brethren that they may know what is the surpassing greatness of the power of God towards those who believe, according to the working of the strength of that might which he wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead. When the Apostle tries to express his sense of the Omnipotence of God, language seems inadequate, and he piles up words one upon another, each more forcible than the last—power, energy, strength, might—if so be that he may raise the conception of his readers to that to which he has himself attained. And yet he counted not himself to have apprehended. Like some traveller climbing the mountain-side, each step he took he saw more of the heights stretching above him towards heaven. Mist and cloud rolled away, displaying peak after peak which before was hidden, and that which from the valley seemed like a needle's point, now rose as a mighty pyramid of eternal snow, a mountain on the top of mountains. He had felt, he daily felt the power of Christ's resurrection, but he wanted to feel it more. Forgetting the things behind, he pressed forward to those things which were before. The night was far spent, twilight was creeping over the world. Every step he took, every moment as it passed, brought him nearer to the perfect day.

But we may not be satisfied with this general

<sup>1</sup> Chap. i. 19, 20.

view of the Apostle's meaning. He has himself told us distinctly in what way the power of Christ's resurrection is exerted and manifested. And first of all, it is a *justifying* power. Many persons in the present day feel a great repugnance to what is commonly called dogmatic theology. If they cannot eliminate doctrine altogether from Christianity, they try to throw around it a mist of ambiguity which effectually disguises its outline, and it may be wholly conceals it. Disregarding the fact that a great portion of St Paul's Epistles is not only doctrinal but argumentative; disparaging the labours of some of the wisest and holiest and most learned members of the Church, who have devoted their lives to the elucidation of the doctrines of our faith; reducing Christianity from its true position as the first and greatest of all sciences, to the level of moral philosophy; forgetting that without faith we cannot please God, and that faith must have an object, and that the embodiment of that object in words is theology, and that a theology must contain propositions and admit of inferences; they hold that "mystery is the nearest approach to truth: only by indefiniteness can we avoid putting words in the place of things." And yet when St Paul tells us that Christ was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification—mystery, profound unfathomable mystery though it be, which he records—there is, thank God, nothing indefinite in his statement. Our Blessed

Lord died, because we have sinned, and death is the penalty of sin. He rose, because His sacrifice on our behalf has been accepted. The penalty once paid and for ever, can never again be exacted; the justice of God once satisfied has no more demands to make. And thus the acquittal of every believing sinner is sealed and stamped with the approval of God the Judge of all by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea more, that is risen again<sup>1</sup>."

And here, before passing on, I would urge especially on the younger members of the Church the great importance of studying for themselves the Word of God with a view to ascertaining its teaching on the great cardinal doctrines of Christianity. I believe that one reason why so many persons dislike creeds and formularies, is because they know not the Scriptures and the power of God therein revealed. I believe that one reason why our practice accords so little with our profession, that our thoughts are worldly, our hearts are harassed with care and perplexity, our lives are so inconsistent, our Churchmanship so lukewarm, is, that we do not search the Scriptures to see whether the things taught by the Church are so. In such study, prayerfully and earnestly conducted, we should find light and strength

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 33-34.

and comfort and peace. In such study we should be doing the will of God, and we should know of the doctrine that it is of Him.

Thus in the hour of temptation, when sin is holding out its baits, or falsehood is presented in a seductive form, we should ever have at hand an unerring standard by which to test actions or opinions, a shield against temptation and a preservative against error. St Paul, I think, desired to know in this sense the power of Christ's resurrection, to have his faith in its justifying efficacy more firm and unwavering, and to enjoy more of that peace with God which is the fruit of living faith.

But the resurrection of Christ has also a *sancifying* power. All those who are united to Christ by a living faith, who by regeneration are engrafted into Christ, and made members of His mystical body, are said to be raised and to have ascended into heaven together with Christ<sup>1</sup>. Wondrous truth! that the Eternal God should not only have taken into union with Himself this poor frail nature of ours, but that He should have so exalted and glorified it! That we, if we are His true faithful people—we, even now in this life of sorrow and temptation and sin, we, the youngest, the feeblest, should have been raised up, *with* and *as* Christ's dead body, and should now be sitting in Christ in heavenly places. Yet so it is. Such union is assured to every one

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. ii. 6.

who has been spiritually raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. The knowledge of this truth is a powerful incitement to the cultivation of holiness. For this first resurrection in Christ is a sure pledge of a future resurrection through Him to a life of everlasting happiness. "If ye be risen with Christ,...set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth<sup>1</sup>." Count yourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God. Resist sin, not only in its grosser forms of lust, or avarice, or malice, or dishonesty, but cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Let the world see that you are risen with Christ, that you have higher aims, higher pleasures, higher occupations, higher hopes than they. Let your Christianity be more than "the enthusiasm of humanity:" let it be an intelligent faith working by ardent unselfish love. Let it be not a sentiment, but a principle. Seek, like St Paul, to know and to manifest the power of Christ's resurrection.

Lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a source of *hope* to His people. St Paul set before himself, as the end of all his efforts, the prize of his race—this grand consummation—"if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." It was *a* resurrection for which he hoped, but a resurrection from amongst the dead, a rising to the life immortal, to be thenceforward for ever with the Lord. It is

<sup>1</sup> Colossians iii. 1, 2.

written, "Blessed and holy is he which hath part in the first resurrection<sup>1</sup>." We read, too, of the dead in Christ rising *first*<sup>2</sup>. St John<sup>3</sup> speaks of "the rest of the dead" who slumber on, after the saints have risen to meet Christ at His coming. This language seems to explain the use, by St Paul, in the verse which follows the text, of the unusual but expressive phrase, τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν, a phrase the more remarkable on account of the repetition of the article. He desired them to lay firmer hold on this blessed hope of immortality, to taste more of its comfort in the bereavements of life, more of its supporting power in the prospect of death. How full is our own Burial Office of this blessed hope! When the minister meets the train of mourners following the lifeless corpse of one they loved, what words of strong consolation are those with which he first greets them! No human exhortation, however tender, no Apostolic assurance though inspired by the Holy Ghost, no record of a Patriarch's faith, but the words of Jesus Himself—words so full of love and compassion, of promise and of might, that they have soothed the anguish of many a stricken heart, and inspired with hope Divine those who were weeping for the dead, and refused to be comforted: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xx. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xx. 5.



shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

We may often have marvelled at the great faith which the Church expects of her children, putting into their mouth, when their sorrow is yet fresh, when life has just lost for them its light, and when a desolation more bitter than anguish has laid waste their hearts, when the thought of hope or comfort seems mockery, and even resignation seems all but impossible—putting then into their mouths, I say, words of hearty thanksgiving to God that it hath pleased Him to take the departed brother or sister to Himself. And yet such expressions are not inconsistent with the rest of that wonderful service. Let us not strive to bring down such a service to our low level of Christian attainment. If there be (as some suppose) reason for altering that Office in another part—if it be desirable to expunge the expression of sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, with which expression we commit each departed Christian to the ground, it might seem equally desirable to omit the thanksgiving of which I have spoken. But God forbid that the Church should be robbed of one word of that service ! If, owing to her relation to the State, certain terms appear sometimes unsuitable, let the State which is responsible for such relation be required to modify it ; but let not the Church be spoiled of her birthright, or her

Risen Head be denied the honour which is His due, and which is done to Him by every faithful use of that Scriptural Office.

The more we seek in our several stations to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, to live as men to whom their religion is a great, a dominant reality, the greater will be our influence in resisting every attempt that may be made to injure the Church, either by depriving her of her temporalities, or by tampering with her formularies. Let us shew that we at least value those formularies, by seeking to rise to their high standard of Christian excellence, by desiring and labouring and praying that we may know ever more and more of Christ and "the power of His resurrection."

## APPENDIX.

### NOTE (A).

THE following important passage occurs in the Inaugural Address delivered by the Earl of Harrowby, K.G., as President of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, at Birmingham, on Sept. 25, 1866. It is extracted from the report in the *Times* newspaper of Sept. 28th. I would premise that I cannot agree with his lordship in the opinion that "the evidences of our common faith" "can be studied equally" in the works of "the Unitarian Nonconformist Lardner" and in the treatises of orthodox Christians, of Protestants or of Romanists. We ought, as English Churchmen, to have sufficient confidence in our own creed, to rest satisfied with the best works on Evidences which our own divines can produce. We may study the writings of others to supplement or correct these. But as text-books for educational purposes these alone can with safety be employed.

"And, with regard to religion, is there not some common ground for all Christians? With regard to matters of faith, there are too many points of difference to allow us to enter upon them; but could not the evidences of our common faith be made matter for most interesting and common instruction?—a subject which can be studied equally in the works of the Unitarian Nonconformist Lardner; of the English churchmen Butler, Paley, Jenyns, Whately, and Daniel Wilson; of the Presbyterian Chalmers, or the Roman Catholic Abbé Frayssinous, without awakening the jealousy of

sects or churches? And, as attendance at your lectures is voluntary, I don't see how any one can be offended by the introduction of such topics. It is a great defect of the present time that no such instruction is to be found in courses of education for any class. It has everything to recommend in itself—it is most attractive as a study, it leads to a reference of ancient and modern history, a discussion of the laws of evidence, and an inquiry into the reasons for conviction upon subjects of the highest interest to the human mind and the human destiny. It cannot well be taught in schools to the very young, for they have not the materials available, and it would be out of season with the habits of thought desirable for their age. But when youth is already engaged in the concerns of life he finds much to try the simple faith which he has imbibed as a habit from his early instructors. He has passions within, bad companions without; the current and lighter literature of the day, even occasionally severe science itself, infuses doubts to combat which he is armed with insufficient weapons. He lives in an age in which everything is questioned, and where is he to ask for answers? Where is he to learn that if there are sometimes difficulties in the way of belief there are still greater difficulties in the way of a man who knows what the strength of evidence in favour of religion is, in the way of his coming to unbelief? How completely he must abandon all these reasons for conviction which would guide him in his decision on other questions before he can yield to the minor doubts and difficulties which have suggested or suggest themselves, and abandon for a mere negative position the settled faith which he had early imbibed. He cannot learn it from his companions, his parents, or his employers. Even sermons do not furnish the fitting occasion, because they must be mainly exhortations to conduct rather than logical deductions from evidence. Is it not a great defect in a great country that, unless compelled by absolute necessity, we should undertake so much, and not include this most necessary of all knowledge?"

I would also commend to the careful consideration of all persons engaged or interested in the work of religious education the admirable preface to Mr Potts's valuable edition of Paley's *Evidences*.

## NOTE (B).

I am well aware that a difference of opinion exists among commentators as to the identity of the incident recorded by St John (c. ii. 13—17) with that narrated by St Matthew (c. xxi. 12, &c.) and the other two Evangelists. From St John's account we should infer that our Lord drove the traffickers out of the temple shortly before the first Passover in His ministry, and just after the performance of His first miracle. The other Evangelists state that a similar occurrence took place two years later, immediately before our Lord's last Passover. Hence some have inferred that *twice* during His public ministry, at its commencement and again at its close, our Lord cleansed the Temple; while another and smaller class of expositors consider that St John describes the same incident as the Synoptists. The argument in the text will not be affected by the adoption of either of these views. I am indebted to a friend<sup>1</sup> who has paid special attention to the exegesis of the New Testament, for the following statement and determination of this interesting question; and I gladly avail myself of his permission to subjoin it here.

“There is no doubt that the Synoptical Evangelists, when narrating the purification of the Temple by our Lord, all refer to one and the same event, which took place on the Monday of the Passion-week. For although St Matthew (xxi. 12) *appears* to ascribe the action to the day of the triumphal entry, while St Mark places it “on the morrow” (τῆ ἐπαύριον, xi. 12), this is only in accordance with his usual practice of grouping together incidents or discourses without any very precise notes of time. A signal example

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. E. Prescott, M.A., late Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Author of *Every-day Scripture Difficulties*. Longmans, and Co.

follows immediately (vv. 19, 20)—the cursing of the fig-tree, and the observation by the disciples of the fulfilment of the curse, which belongs properly to the following day (Mark xi. 20). St Mark, on the contrary, fixes the time of the cleansing very accurately, having in the preceding verse noted the late hour at which Jesus, after His entry into Jerusalem, took His survey of the Temple and of its desecration.

“But when we turn to the account given by St John (ii. 13) of the Temple-purification, we have good reason to suppose that he is speaking of a similar but totally distinct occurrence. The precise order of events which he gives—the marriage in Cana, the brief residence at Capernaum, the journey to Jerusalem to keep the Paschal Feast, then the cleansing of the Temple, and the subsequent discourses,—seems to fix the incident at the first Passover of our Lord’s ministry, two years prior to the Passover mentioned by the Synoptists. This is confirmed by the evident connection between the act and the conversation which follows. ‘Destroy this *temple*,’ said our Lord, ‘and in three days I will raise it up.’ The Jews replied, ‘Forty and six years was this *temple* in building,’ thus also fixing a date which cannot be referred to the last Passover.

“St John is narrating discourses which arose out of the early Judean ministry—a ministry which lasted until the close of the year. And the context apart, it is an unparalleled thing for *him* to insert here out of its place an incident belonging to the last few days of the Saviour’s life.

“Why, it may be asked, have not any of the Evangelists mentioned the *two* occasions? The Synoptists only commence their main history with the Galilean ministry, and never touch upon the subject of the ministry in Judæa until they approach the events of the last Passover. They refer indeed at the time of the Passion to the saying, ‘Destroy this temple,’ (Matt. xxvi. 61; Mark xiv. 58); but it is not within their province to relate the occasion on which it was spoken. St John, on the other hand, dwells upon the first Passover :

while in regard to the last his narrative is chiefly confined to the spiritual discourses of Jesus. He, probably, would not mention the second purification, as it had been already described by the Synoptists, and as it did not bear upon that *inner* development of the glorification of Christ which it was his especial design to trace.

“It was very natural that Jesus should perform this act both at the commencement and the close of His ministry. It was symbolical of the object of His labours—to purify the *spiritual* temple of God, and expel those who should defile it. Looking at the accounts of the two transactions, we see that in the former the rebuke is, as we should expect, far less severe. In the first, the polluted Temple is called ‘a house of merchandize;’ in the second, ‘a den of thieves,’ with special reference to the language of the prophets (Isai. lvi. 7; Jer. vii. 11). Each occasion, too, appears to have given rise to a demand from the rulers of the authority of Jesus for doing these things. To the former demand an answer was vouchsafed; to the latter it was pointedly refused.

“Hengstenberg (*Christologie*, III. 670 sq.) also insists strongly on the necessity of two cleansings in order to carry out the figure of the prophet Malachi with regard to the double purification of the theocracy here represented by the Temple.

“And if it be urged that the identity has been supported by some great commentators, such as Strauss, De Wette, Priestly, Lücke and Neander, I would simply summon on our side Origen (in *Evang. Joannis*, Tom. XI.), Augustine (*de Consensu Evang.* Lib. II. c. 67), Chrysostom (*Homil. lxxii. in Matt.*), Greswell, Ellicott, Alford, Wordsworth, Thomson, Williams, Milman, Bengel, Stier, Olshausen, Lange, Wieseler, Tischendorf, Meyer, Tholuck, Kuinöl, Ebrard, Luthardt, and Hengstenberg.”





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